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Forum Theatre and the Role of the Joker: Social Activist, Educator, Therapist, Director; The Changing Perspectives of Canadian Jokers

by

Anne Louise Smith ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Drama

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1996

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ABSTRACT

The practice of Forum Theatre has been adapted to multitudinous needs and situations throughout the world. In Canada, Forum Theatre has been performed since the early 1980's. "Jokers" (those who facilitate a Forum event) in this country have found that their ideas, beliefs and methods have altered with time and experience. This thesis examines the present concerns of twelve Canadian Jokers and offers a perspective of how their practice has changed.

Part I of the thesis situates Forum Theatre within the body of theatre work called Popular Theatre. Part I also explores Forum Theatre's relationship to psychodrama. Part II examines the testimony of twelve Jokers and gives a range of Forum practice in Canada. Their responses are analyzed, focussing on common themes: concern for the safety of the participants and the difficulty of defining what Forum Theatre is.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Myer Horowitz Scholarship, University of Alberta, 1995.

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Travel Grant, University of Alberta 1995.

Special Bursery, Department of Drama, University of Alberta, 1995.

1000 Hertz and the Office of Human Rights, University of Alberta.

Theatre on the Line and the Sexual Harassment Policy Office,
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Routledge, for quotations taken from *Games For Actors and Non-Actors* and *The Rainbow of Desire*, Augusto Boal, author; and *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, editors.

Theatre Communications Group, for quotations taken from *Theater of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal, author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1 SITUATING FORUM THEATRE

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1: THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FORUM THEATRE 5
- The Joker in the Structure of Forum Theatre
- Personal Experience as a Joker

CHAPTER II: THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORUM THEATRE TO PSYCHODRAMA, SOCIODRAMA, AND PLAY THERAPY AND THE THEATRE/THERAPY DEBATE 17
- Similarities of Process and Intent
- Similarities in Theory
- The Theatre/Therapy Debate

PART 11 THE PRESENT PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIAN PRACTITIONERS

CHAPTER 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND FORUM PRACTITIONERS INTERVIEWED 29
- The Practitioners
- The Questions
- Points to Consider in Framing the Responses of the Jokers

CHAPTER II: THE RANGE OF FORUM THEATRE WORK AND THE LINKS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS 43

CHAPTER III: THE ISSUE OF SAFETY FOR PARTICIPANTS: DEFINING SAFETY 55
- Safety for the Spectactors
- Safety for the Actors
- Safety for the Joker

CHAPTER IV: THE NAMING OF FORUM THEATRE: THEATRE, THERAPY, EDUCATION, SOCIAL/POLITICAL ACTION 75
- Forum Theatre as Therapy: Collisions with 'Therapeutic Ideologies'
- Forum Theatre as Education or Social Action: The Issue of Paternalism
- The Exclusivity of Professionalism vs Trust
- Disrupting the Status-Quo from the In-Between Space

CONCLUSION FUTURE TRENDS FOR FORUM THEATRE IN CANADA 91

BIBLIOGRAPHY 101

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: PRECIS OF THE FORUM WORK OF JOKERS INTERVIEWED 106

APPENDIX II: AN OVERVIEW OF COPS IN THE HEAD AND RAINBOW OF DESIRE THEATRE TECHNIQUES 110

PART 1

SITUATING FORUM THEATRE

INTRODUCTION

> One of the hypotheses of the Theatre of the Oppressed is that knowledge acquired aesthetically is already, in itself, the beginning of a transformation.[1]

Forum Theatre is method of audience-interactive theatre which is part of a body of theatre work called Popular Theatre. A general description of Popular Theatre is theatre which is created by and/or for and/or with a community to address its issues of the moment. Ross Kidd[2] describes the "overlapping trends of popular theatre" in Canada:

---

[1] Augusto Boal, The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 109.

[2] Alan Filewod describes Ross KIdd' s relationship to Popular Theatre in Canada: "The first steps to establishing a formal alliance of theatres commited to programs of social action came in 1978, when Chris Brookes, then artistic director of the Mummers Troupe, convened in Newfoundland a meeting of representatives of left-wing and collective theatre from across the country. Delegates to that meeting were introduced to Ross Kidd, a Canadian who had just returned from several years in Zambia and Botswana, where as an adult educator he had pioneered the use of theatre as a tool of popular education. Kidd's African work inspired many of the Canadians he met, but in fact, as Kidd himself wrote in a letter to George Lee of the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Department, he had been inspired by a Canadian example. Chris Brooke's article on the Mummers Troupe's historic 1973 intervention in Sally's Cove, published in *This Magazine*, had encouraged him to begin experimenting in popular theatre in Botswana. In the ensuing years, Kidd had become a principal organizer and teacher of popular theatre in the Third World, working extensively in Africa, the Philippines and Bangladesh; consequently, a case can be made that the Canadian experience of popular theatre, which begins with community intervention companies like the Mummers Troupe and Theatre Euh!, is related both historically and methodologically to the popular theatre movement of the Third World." "The Marginalization of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance in the Discourse of Canadian Theatre History", Theatre History in Canada, 10, 2, (Fall 1989), 200-206.

a) community docu-drama[3]
b) theatre as a tool for community development
c) theatre as a tool for raising political awareness
d) theatre as a means for remedial education
e) people's theatre as a tool for conscientization and community organizing[4]

Four of the above trends suggest that Popular theatre is a "tool" or "means" to precipitate social consciousness and/or action. Popular Theatre is practised in diverse forms by many community and professional theatre groups in Canada. Two companies which have a social action mandate and use Forum Theatre are PASSIONATE BALANCE in Ottawa, and HEADLINES THEATRE in Vancouver[5] .

Forum Theatre, developed by Augusto Boal as part of his theatre practice which he calls Theatre of the Oppressed (TO)[6] , is singular in that the audience members are invited to become players on the stage and initiate changes to the play being presented in order to explore possible alternative actions for the characters they see as oppressed. There is a physical exchange of role and place between the actors and audience. The interaction of the audience members, termed "spectactors", with the actors is mediated by a character called the "Joker". These are terms coined by Boal in his poetics of the Theatre of the Oppressed.[7]

---

[3] Kidd explains "community docu-drama": Theatre Passe Muraille (Toronto) established this genre in 1973 with The Farm Show in which they used community documentary research, collective production, and "feed-back." The actors lived in a small farming community for about six weeks, and drew their play directly from the concerns of the farmers. They performed it back to this community and other rural communities in Ontario. . . . It also marked the beginning of collective theatre. The collective is a microcosm of the community at large. . . . The collective docu-drama movement is concerned with producing good Canadian theatre rather than with mobilizing people for change in a specific way. . . . their primary interest is to produce theatre based on the metaphors of the community rather than to raise a specific social issue or analysis of society as the focus for discussion, organization and action. . . . Nonetheless. . .. The process creates the obligation of playing the final product back to the community and other communities facing similar problems." "Popular Theatre and Politcal Action in Canada", printed by Participatory Research Group, Toronto, circa 1984.

[4] Ross Kidd, "Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada", printed by Participatory Research Group, Toronto, circa 1984. This article gives an excellent overview of the Popular Theatre movement in Canada and examples of Popular Theatre projects which illustrate the five trends Kidd describes.

[5] These companies are directed, respectively, by Lib Spry and David Diamond, who are two of the 'Jokers' interviewed for this thesis.

[6] TO includes other forms of theatre presentation: Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Cops in the Head, Rainbow of Desire. Boal has developed all these forms, which lead to Forum Theatre performance, over twenty-five years, first in Latin America and subsequently in Europe. TO is practised world-wide and Boal operates training centres in Rio de Janeiro and Paris.

My interest, as a practitioner, regarding Forum Theatre is how its theatrical structure fosters the development of spontaneous creative drama. My belief is that the spontaneous act of creation is, in itself, the manifestation of inner knowledge which may be utilized by the creator not only in the fictive space of theatrical creation but in the actual space of daily living. When this spontaneous creation is experienced corporately with other spontaneous creators and witnessed by potential co-creators in the theatre space, the individual act becomes cooperative and the ground is prepared for new possibilities of thought and action in the social context. It is the form of Forum Theatre which makes it a "rehearsal for reality"[8] as much as its content.

The literature about Forum Theatre has focussed largely on individual projects. Until the "Canadian Roundtable" interview published in 1994[9], the views and concerns of Jokers had not been addressed in the form of a discussion between practitioners. This roundtable interview examines concerns about both content and structure of Forum Theatre projects. The most important structural element of Forum Theatre is the role of the Joker; the experience of Canadian Jokers is the focus of my exploration.

---

[7] Augusto Boal, Theater of the Oppressed, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985. This work describes the poetics or theory of TO.

[8] Boal uses this term to describe the action of Forum Theatre which extends beyond the theatre event. "In the conventional theatre, there is a code: the code of non-interference by the audience. In the Theatre of the Oppressed, there is a proposition: interference, intervention. In the conventional theatre we present images of the world for contemplation; in the Theatre of the Oppressed, these images are presented to be destroyed and replaced by others. In the first case, the dramatic action is a 'fictitious' action, which substitutes for the 'real' action; in the second, the action shown on stage is a possibility, an alternative, and the intervenor-spectators (active observors) are called upon to create new action, new alternatives which are not substitutes for real action, but rehearsals, pre-actions which precede--rather than stand in for the actual action, the action we want to transform a reality we are trying to change. The rehearsal of an action is in itself an action, the practice of an action then to be practised in real life."
Augusto Boal, The Rainbow of Desire, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 72.

[9] Mady Schutzman, "Canadian Roundtable: an Interview", Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, eds. Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 198-226.

CHAPTER 1

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FORUM THEATRE

THE JOKER IN THE STRUCTURE OF FORUM THEATRE

In Forum Theatre the exchange between actors and spectactors is facilitated by the Joker. Boal's sense of the word "Joker" is allied to the idea of a wild card. When the 'Joker is wild' it controls the game and the hierarchy of the rest of the deck may be upset. The mandate of Theatre of the Oppressed is to counter the status quo and upset the deck:

> In order to understand this *poetics of the oppressed* one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people-- "spectators," passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon--into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action. . . . Aristotle proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates power to the dramatic character so that the latter may act and think for him. Brecht proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates power to the character who thus acts in his place but the spectator reserves the right to think for himself, often in opposition to the character. In the first case, a "catharsis" occurs; in the second, an awakening of critical consciousness. But the *poetics of the oppressed* focuses on the action itself: The spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or to think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change--in short, trains himself for real action (Theater of the Oppressed, 122).

This is a political agenda and the Joker acts to reshuffle the deck so that the spectators may become protagonists, both within the play, and further, in life. When the spectactors enter the play they become actors and therefore susceptable to the possibility of change. As Richard Courtenay explains:

> When we put ourselves in someone elses's shoes, we try to think and act as they do. This act of identification and impersonation is the bedrock of all dramatic action: infantile identifications lead to it, and theatrical acts result from it. But when we act in such a way we also cognitively engage the other person. We try to understand them and, by doing so, understand more about ourselves. This is why, for example, spontaneous dramatic

> action is so effective in overcoming bigotry and stereotypes. We learn not to stereotype when we put ourselves in someone else's shoes. The fiction of drama allows us to live through an alternative to rigid attitudes, giving us a world of dramatic possibility. The more we do so, the more intelligence becomes a factor in our lives.[10]

How, then, does the Joker become the bridge between the spectactors and actors, the mediator and the means? Forum Theatre has a basic methodology which allows the structure and nature of the audience/Joker/actor interaction to vary with the individual dynamics of each event. In performance the general method is:[11]

1. The Joker introduces the audience to the concepts of Theatre of the Oppressed and may have them participate with the actors in theatre games. The audience and actors develop a common language and experience through this process.

2. The actors perform a short play which presents a social problem of oppression. This play offers no solutions or resolution to the problem presented; it is termed an "anti-model".

3. The Joker explains that the play will be performed a second time, but during this performance, any audience member, termed a "spectactor", may interrupt the performance by calling "stop" and then replace the protagonist to see if another course of action will change the dynamics of the oppressive moment and offer a solution to the problem. When the spectactor making the intervention has tried what she/he wanted to explore then she/he will go back to her/his seat and the play will continue in its original form until another spectactor calls "stop".

4. The play begins a second time and interventions occur.

5. The Joker brings the Forum Theatre to closure, acknowledging the interventions and ending the theatre event. (Some analysis of the interventions

---

[10] Richard Courtenay, Drama and Intelligence: A Cognitive Theory, Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990, 21.

[11] This summary of the methodolgy of Forum Theatre is adapted from the many examples Boal cites in Games for Actors and Non-Actors, London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

involving the audience and actors may be initiated by the Joker during steps 4 and/or 5.)

Boal practises Forum Theatre as a rehearsal for reality. The spectactors are dynamised to explore, through theatre, solutions which they may practise in reality. Their right to exercise their theatrical vocation models their right to take action in their individual lives and in the life of their society. There is no question of success or failure in the spectactors' interventions: an intervention which does not solve or alter the problem allows futher exploration and deeper understanding of the dynamics of oppression. In Forum, the focus is on the social, collective understanding of issues of oppression: who is oppressed?, how are they oppressed?, by whom are they oppressed?, how do we, as audience, relate to the oppressed/oppressor?, how can systematized oppression be broken? Boal claims:

> The theatrical profession, which belongs to a few, should not hide the existence and permanence of the theatrical vocation, which belongs to all. Theatre is a vocation for all human beings: it is the true nature of humanity.
>
> The Theatre of the Oppressed is a system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theatre into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions.[12]

The Joker's role is pivotal to the creation of Forum Theatre. He/She stands physically and figuratively on the border between the audience space and the playing space; his/her role is to act simultaneously as bridge and bridger. As the character and person of the Joker is the conduit through and by whom the spectactors are drawn onto the stage, he/she is also consciously pursuing the process of bridging, a self-conscious bridge who uses his/her body and presence to facilitate the crossing over between actors and spectactors. Boal lists his precepts for the Joker :

---

[12] Augusto Boal, The Rainbow of Desire, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 14.

The Conduct of the Joker

1. Jokers must avoid all actions which could manipulate or influence the audience. They must not draw conclusions which are not self-evident.

2. Jokers personally decide nothing. They spell out the rules of the game, but in complete acceptance from the outset that the audience may alter them if it is deemed necessary for the study of the proposed subject.

3. The joker must constantly be relaying doubts back to the audience so that it is they who make the decisions.

4. Jokers must watch out for all 'magic' solutions.[13] They can interrupt the spect-actor/protagonist's action if they consider this action to be magic, not *ruling* that it is magic, but rather asking the audience to decide.

5. The physical stance of the joker is extremely important . . . everything that happens on stage, by which I mean all the *images* produced by the body or objects, is *significant*.

6. . . . the joker must be Socratic--dialectically . . . the joker is a midwife . . . the joker must assist the birth of all ideas, of all actions.[14]

ANALYSIS OF THE JOKER'S ROLE WITHIN THE DYNAMICS OF THE FORUM EXPERIENCE

"The Joker is a mid-wife." Lib Spry expands Boal's metaphor:

> The aim in all these workshops[15] is to create a safe place where people feel free to exchange their stories and look for solutions to their collective problems. There is no judgment and I try to keep away from interpretation. Flexibility is the key. *The joker's job is that of midwife to the process.* This is very different from the way we have been taught to lead and to experience being led. This is especially true if the work includes a public performance with all the pressures of presenting a play. The joker must continually find the balance between honoring the process of the group and the needs of an effective final product.[16]

---

[13] A 'magic' solution occurs when a spectactor, as the character, takes an action that would not be physically, psychologically, or emotionally possible for that character to make. An example would be for an antagonist to suddenly become a 'nice guy'.

[14] Boal, Games For Actors and Non-Actors, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 232-235.

[15] The "workshops" are the sessions where a Forum play is developed.

[16] Lib Spry, "Structures of Power: Toward a Theatre of Liberation," Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism emphasis mine), 179.

In Forum Theatre, the participants, audience, actors and Joker contract, or agree, to play together to create a theatre event This 'contract' provides the common ground from which everyone works toward the same end. Lib Spry gives an example of what she has learned about negotiating contracts with spectactors:

> I have now had enough difficult emotional moments in workshops to start them by explaining that we are involved in a theatrical process to initiate social action and that this is always a risky business. I tell them that they know their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual limits whereas I do not. I ask the participants to be responsible for themselves; it is up to them to say no to anything they are not ready to deal with. . . . At the same time I remind them that the work we are doing is collective, that the individual input is shared by the group as a whole.
>
> . . . If the animator/joker takes on the responsibility for each workshop participant, they are perpetuating a form of progressive paternalism which creates an atmosphere in which the individual participants feel, once again, that they are not in control of their own lives. At worst, it can create a sense of powerlessness, at best a good feeling in the workshop but no desire to take action outside of it.
>
> One of the most striking consequences of making this introduction has been the discovery that those people who clearly understand that they have been or are experiencing exploitation, domination, abuse, or oppression are least likely to be disturbed by the work, and most likely to take responsibility for themselves and step out of an exercise or technique if they are having problems (Playing Boal178).

Spry's analysis points to the need for clarifying the roles of the participants, including the Joker; the risks and responsibilities that must be taken; the goals of the process. She makes it clear that if a group action is to be achieved then the participants must take individual responsibility to both share and protect themselves. The better prepared they are, the more they know personally about issues of oppression, the better able they are to contribute to the group process with minimal risk to their own safety.

Safety is a huge concern for Canadian Forum practitioners. This concern is raised many times in the "Canadian Roundtable" and by the Jokers interviewed for this thesis. A listing of the factors effecting the dynamics of Forum Theatre and the particular considerations Jokers field in facilitating a Forum workshop or performance demonstrates the special nature of Forum Theatre and why 'safety' can become a concern. The following points are compiled from the examples of projects described by Boal and the practitioners who participated in the study for this thesis.

What is the relationship between the actors, the Joker, and the audience; what are their expectations? Forum Theatre began as a workshop process. Boal would be invited by a specific group--a union, neighbourhood, village, school--to work with them to develop a piece of theatre to explore a specific political problem. Some members of this group would agree to prepare and act in a play for their community which would be the vehicle for their rehearsal for reality. Thus, the actors were members of the community for which they performed and the audience sensitized and of a similar mind in seeking solutions for their problem. There are other models. The actors, as professionals, may be contracted by an agency to research and present a Forum piece to a community to which they are strangers. A theatre company may decide they want to do a Forum piece for the general public. The Joker may be part of the process from the beginning, as director, or collaborator, or may be brought in at the end to play the role in the Forum presentation only. All of these possibilities have different bearings on what occurs in the Forum event. If the actors are part of the community, the spectactors will already recognize them as part of the whole. If they are outsiders, the community will see itself as a group and the actors as another group. If the company of actors is larger than or equal to the number of spectactors the actors will be recognized as a group but the audience will see themselves as individuals. If the Forum is for the general public, the audience will not see themselves as a community.

The Joker must also be aware where she/he is in the dynamics of the situation: an outsider?, an expert?, sympathetic to the issues being explored?, a member of the community? Each Joker has his/her own style of joking; they may be a character or have a 'Joker personna'. The Joker defines his/her role in the process.

The audience's expectations are considered. Was the desire for the Forum concensual?, democratic?, bureaucratic?, dictated? Does everyone know why they are there? Do they want to be entertained?, challenged? Do they want to participate? What has it cost them to be there? What is the range of individual differences in the group? The amount of time and energy the Joker decides to spend on achieving a common ground for the spectactors will depend on these factors.

The actors' expectations must be accounted for. Do they know their audience personally? Will they be seen only as the characters they portray, or will their true personalities be known by the spectactors? What is their personal depth of understanding of the issue of oppression they are dealing with? The actors will, deliberately or not, act as models for the spectactors to follow; what they model in their interaction with the Joker is crucial to the process of the Forum.

The physical space will influence the interaction of the participants. Is it a familiar space to the audience? Is everyone--spectactors, Joker and actors--on the same level or is the playing space raised or lowered? Does the lighting illuminate the whole space or just the stage? Does the audience fill the space or are they dwarfed within it?

Once everyone has gathered for the event *the 'contract process'* begins. *The Joker must negotiate the contract, mediate its enactment, and provide closure for the Forum.* In negotiating the contract the Joker may have specific terms she/he wishes to establish such as procedure for the Forum and role expectations. She/he may state what she/he believes are the important criteria for the Forum process to operate smoothly and/or she/he may let the participants decide what needs to be made clear for everyone. The time allowed for the Forum Theatre event may influence these decisions.

The play begins and the contract comes into force. The participants are engaged not only in an exploration of issues of oppression but in an exploration of how they work together. There are many levels at which the exchange between the actors/Joker/spectactors occurs. Paratheatrically, each person is, at the same time, in the process of watching theatre and aware of themselves watching it. Theatrically, they are engaged in the process of concretizing ideas and impulses; they act. Socially, they are aware not only of the roles that are developed through the drama, but of who in the audience takes on those roles and to what effect. Politically, they are aware that each action and statement has implications beyond the specific situation of the play. They will be aware of their personal level of involvement through their physical responses of breath, muscle tension, general level of comfort/discomfort.

At some point the Forum moves from being a role-playing exploration of social oppression to theatre where something new is created from the collective offering of the participants. Does this point, where interchange becomes creation, have markers for the Joker to recognize? What does the Joker do as midwife to facilitate this 'birth' process?

The Joker must also close the Forum. What are the mechanisms for ending the contract? What needs to be part of the closure--validation, evaluation, commissioning (in the sense of the Joker encouraging the audience members to make changes in their lives)? Is there allowance for dissension?

Once the Forum is ended how is it assessed?. Who assesses this; how; when? What is the basis for the assessment? Did the Forum accomplish what the initiators hoped it would or did something else happen? What has been learned from this experience that will be carried into future Forum work?

Forum may not be appropriate for all groups of people or situations. What are the conditions which are optimal for Forum Theatre? Can Forum be used when the issues of oppression are not clearly defined? Can Forum be used for different purposes: i.e. to entertain, to heal, to educate, to provoke? Can and do these purposes work in tandem? The above considerations about the role of the Joker and the dynamics of Forum Theatre are referred to by the Jokers in Part II and form the background of thought for the discussion of larger issues. Lib Spry confirms the importance of these questions:

> How and what we do depends on so much: what are the communities we work with, whether they are already a community with a history (as is a tribe) or whether they are a community who meet because of a common experience but do not know each other (as in some of the women's workshops I have given); what are the issues we are dealing with (sexual harassment is more delicate than equal rights at work); how long we are going to be in the community; what kind of work it is (a forum, a workshop that lasts a day, a week, etc.) To look at all of those questions is for me an intellectual act, which is a necessary part of the process of doing this work. It is, so to speak, the skeleton on which the movement, the analysis, the action and the empowerment can safely hang.[17]

Forum Theatre is both process and product. Boal claims that theatre is learning by experience:

> All the participants in a forum session learn something, become more aware of some problems that they did not consider before because a standard model is challenged and the idea that there are alternatives is clearly demonstrated. . . . What fascinates me about forum is the transitive character of its pedagogy.[18]

As individual experiences are exchanged in the Forum process, a body of knowledge is built which each spectactor and actor can access through witnessing each other's interventions. In this way Forum Theatre is a rehearsal for reality.

When the actors first present the play, or anti-model, they provide an object lesson for the spectactors. Their characters must have integrity in their physicalization so that the spectactors are challenged to intervene with the same degree of integrity and physical commitment. Integrity is one of the factors which fuels the creation of the theatre. There must be a strong level of trust for the spectactors to risk intervening. This trust is encouraged when the actors and Joker relate to each other honestly. The spectactors can measure the honesty of the process, and they will contribute according to what they see.

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[17] Lib Spry, letter to David Diamond, printed in the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance newsletter, Spring, 1989.

[18] Augusto Boal in an interview by Michael Taussig and Richard Schechner, "Boal in in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal", The Drama Review 34, Fall 1990, 50.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS A JOKER

My first exposure to Forum Theatre was in 1991 when I attended a public performance of Headline Theatre's "Out of the Silence". This was a Forum play about systemic abuse within the family, created through a workshop process with First Nations groups in Vancouver. (It later went on to tour, with a different cast, throughout BC, and finally returned to Vancouver to be done as a television Forum for the Knowledge Network.) The subject of the play was relevant to me because of previous work I had done with First Nations Bands on Vancouver Island. I had been aware of Headlines'work in Native communities and wanted to see theatre techniques which could be used to address issues of oppression. Being a spectactor at "Out of the Silence" was an epiphanic experience: I knew that I wanted to be a Joker; the character of the Joker combined the roles of facilitator, director, and actor.

Over the last five years I have explored Boal's processes in creating Forum Theatre with student groups at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Alberta. At first, I developed my own exercises to work towards the final presentation model I had observed at the Headline's performance. Later, I obtained a copy of Boal's Games For Actors and Non-Actors and began to follow his theory and practice. Part of my research for this thesis was to co-teach a senior level course on Popular Theatre at the University of Alberta. I worked with a group of students to follow Boal's workshop model in developing a Forum play . One of the course objectives was to perform collectively created work to target community groups. The Office of Human Rights, on campus, contracted with my student group to perform a Forum Theatre piece about Sexual Harassment at a National Conference for the Canadian Association Against Sexual Harassment in Higher Education (CAASHHE).[19]

In our process of tracking Boal's method outlined in Games For Actors and Non-Actors we explored Image Theatre[20] as part of the Forum creation process. When it was time to perform for the CAASHHE Conference, we were still at the Image Theatre stage of the work. We believed that we could handle interventions but had not reached the point were we could make a Forum play--especially a play which would be sophisticated enough for an audience of professional sexual harassment workers. We decided to do a hybrid of Image and Forum Theatre. The audience collectively created an image that showed sexual harassment in progress. The actors animated the image, first with movement only, second with dialogue that came out of the movement. A scene was thus improvised out of the image created by the spectactors. The scene was then replayed and the rules of Forum explained. The scene was acted again and the spectactors were asked to intervene by calling 'stop' and to come up and replace a character they felt could do something different in the situation to change the dynamics of oppression. I was the Joker and debriefed with the intervenor and the actors after each intervention that occurred.

Since the CAASHHE conference this group has performed a collectively created Forum play as well as done more Image Theatre/Forum Theatre workshops for the Office of Human Rights. In August of 1995 we presented Forum Theatre for children for "Kids on the Fringe" at the Edmonton Fringe Festival. We prepared our own adaptations of fairy tales and invited the child spectactors to replace any character they wanted in order to change the story. They could also create new characters, asking other children to take on the roles; it was the job of the actors to assist them in acting out their ideas while staying in character unless the intervenor decided they should change. The purpose of this exploration was to stimulate the children to create spontaneous, original drama and to entertain themselves.

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[19] This conference was held at Banff, AB, in November, 1994. The title of the conference was "Shades of Gray".

[20] Image Theatre is a technique which precedes Forum Theatre in the workshop/play creation process. Spectactors create still sculptures, using each others' bodies to show images of oppression. These images can be animated; each character in the sculpture comes to life and pursues the objectives that have been built into his/her character by body positioning in relationship to the other characters in the sculpture. The exercise works both to stimulate the participants aesthetically and to clarify the dynamics of the oppression being discussed. The discussion is visual, physical and tactile rather than verbal.

I have learned, from tracking Boal's methodology, that his exercises are effective and can be adapted to any situation. I think that because I was not taught by anyone other that myself it never occurred to me that 'the model' should be considered sacrosanct. Boal certainly insists that you must be flexible to the needs of the spectactors (see "Conduct of the Joker" earlier in this chapter). The character of the Joker is challenging to play. Kathleen Foreman, in her interview with me, reflects the experiences of other Jokers in her summation:

> I've come to understand it much more as a character: the demands of that role are very serious but the role itself cannot be too serious. You have to be that wise fool, the one who speaks the unspoken, the one whom the king allows to live. My style has drawn far less on my skill as a facilitator and integrated much more of my skill as an improvisor and a comedienne. I've come to understand what the demands of the Joker really are . . . you're liberating the audience and you're liberating the actors. The Ring-master must be charming: you must ensure people that they will have a good time, that they will be entertained in the true sense of the word--to entertain: to consider, to contemplate, to relish, to be engaged in. It may not be a 'laugh a minute' but they will be entertained. That's been my journey with it so far.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORUM THEATRE TO PSYCHODRAMA, SOCIODRAMA, AND PLAY THERAPY

AND

THE THEATRE/THERAPY DEBATE

SIMILARITIES OF PROCESS AND INTENT

While Boal developed his techniques for Theatre of the Oppressed from his own experience in Latin America and Europe, his methods and philosophy demonstrate commonnalities with Psychodrama and Sociodrama developed by Dr. J. L. Moreno (1889-1974).[21] Daniel Feldhendler remarks:

> In my opinion, Boal and Moreno share a fundamental conception of theatre and its healing effects and, even further, of human kind. According to Boal, "theatre is conflict and life is conflict. Oppression exists in the relationship between two persons, when dialog becomes monolog. The aim is to become human again by reestablishing the dialog: (Boal 1991, TO workshop in Giessen). This statement is identical to Moreno's target image of establishing an authentic encounter among humans (Feldhendler 1994, 89-90).

Moreno's development of psychodrama began with directing experimental theatre as a young man. His Theatre of Spontaneity in Vienna had premises which correspond to Boal's Forum Theatre:

> It was the central task of the Vienna Theatre of Spontaneity (1921-1923) to bring about a revolution in theatre, to entirely change the

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[21] Daniel Feldhendler, "Augusto Boal and Jacob L. Moreno: Theatre and Therapy." in Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism, eds. Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, London and New York: Routledge, 1994. Future references in this chapter will be indicated as (Feldhendler 1994).

> character of the theatrical event. I tried to acheive this task on four levels:
> 1 The elimination of the playwright and the written play.
> 2 Audience participation, that is "theatre without audience." Everyone is a participant, everyone is an actor.
> 3 Actors and audience as the only creators. Everything is improvised--the play, the action, the motives, the words, the encounters, and the solution to the problems.
> 4 The disappearance of the old stage; instead, there is the open stage, . . . the open space, the living space, life.[22]

Concurrently with his experiments in psychodrama, Moreno explored sociodrama. Marineau explains sociodrama in relation to psychodrama:

> The evening of April 1, 1921, was the first demonstration of what Moreno called sociodrama, . . . a "deep action method dealing with intergroup relations and collective ideologies." Contrary to psychodrama, where the focus is on individual growth in and by the group, in sociodrama the real subject is the group's values and prejudices. . . . The aim is to explore and solve problems that emerge between members of smaller units within a large group, or between groups.[23]

Jonathan Fox, a psychodramatist and founder of Playback Theatre in the United States expands the explanation futher:

> . . . sociodrama is based upon the tacit assumption that the group formed by the audience is already organized by the social and cultural roles which in some degree all the carriers of the culture share. . . . It is the group as a whole which has to be put upon the stage to work out its problem, because the group in sociodrama corresponds to the individual in psychodrama.[24]

These descriptions of sociodrama are close to Boal's political and social agenda for TO. Feldhendler sees similarities between the psychodramatic method and Cop in the Head[25] techniques: "When setting a scene or situation, for instance, Boal now demands that the attribution of the roles be done by the protagonist of the forum scene, a standard procedure in psychodrama (Feldhendler 1994, 89)."

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[22] Jacob L. Moreno, Das Stegreiftheater, second edition, New York: Beacon, 1970, iii. (English translation found in Feldhendler, 1994, 90.]

[23] R. F. Marineau, Jacob Levy Moreno 1889-1974, London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1989,71.

[24] Jonathan Fox, (ed.), The Essential Moreno: Writings on Psychodrama, Group Method, and Spontaneity by J.L. Moreno, M.D. , New York: Springer, 1987, 18.

[25] Cop in the Head is a series of exercises developed by Boal to explore internalized voices of oppression. The protagonist assigns other members of the group concrete roles (ie: "You are my mother."; "You are the priest.") and then interacts with those characters to explore his/her internalized oppression. See Appendix II for a description of Cop in the Head techniques.

As Boal is moving into theatrical exploration of individual problems, (as evidenced in his new work, The Rainbow of Desire,) the psychodramatic community is exploring ways to extend psychotherapy into social dimensions. Feldhendler cites seminar program notes from a presentation by Dr. E. M. Shearon at the Institute for Psychodrama in Cologne in 1989:

> We learned through the work with protagonist-centered psychodrama to move from the external (eg., symptom, conflict), the playful, "coincidental" group encounters to personal catharsis and liberation. Catharsis is the liberation of the individual's spontaneity. The job or role of the psychodramatist is to then direct the liberated spontaneity from the internal back to the external in order to deal with the problems of society (Feldhendler 1994, 100).

In these notes, the role of the psychodramatist is similar to the role of the Joker. Feldhendler makes a useful distinction between the work of each:

> While Boal's theatre work does explore the protagonist's inner psychic realities, it does so in a way that cannot be considered therapy in the strict sense. A therapeutic frame demands certain indispensable conditions: a clearly established basis of co-operation in which the roles and relationships among the participants are clearly defined (eg., therapist/client); a clear goal in the sense of a work-task (eg., relief of certain pains and symptoms of the client); and agreed-upon time-span for the process. Although Boal's theatre work is not therapy in this traditional sense, it still offers healing powers in a socio-political sense (Feldhendler1994, 94).

While distinctions are made between TO and psychodrama/sociodrama the commonalities of process and intent are apparent.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ROLE OF THE JOKER AND THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

R. B. Haas draws conclusions about the role of Sociodrama in education which can also be applied to the Forum process and which indicate the similarities between the two techniques:

> What are the implications of Sociodramatic methods in educational situations? For the teacher's role? For the student's role? For the character of education in a democracy?
>
> 1. Sociodramatic methods extend the one-way communication process (the teacher to pupil) to a more inclusive one: a triangular or *three-way* communication process (teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, and pupil-teacher) which is *primarily interactional* in character.
> 2. In this interactional learning situation, teachers as well as pupils *earn* their role-statuses through the *quality of the communication*[26] in their interpersonal relations.
> 3. Sociodramatic methods free the teacher from her traditional *authoritarian role* . . . and give her more flexible roles--the *indirective role* . . . and the *Interactive* (or democratic) *role* . . . .
> 4. Sociodramatic methods free the student from the traditional subordinate role-status and stimulate him to become active, interactive, and self-directive in his own behalf. He earns his role-status in the class group through *the quality of the communication* in his interpersonal relations.[27]
>
> Reading the cues of behavior in specific life situations, however, gives us the primary data for a science of human relations. As we learn to read the role playing of *ourselves and others*, our aims, our attitudes, our aspirations, and our ways of interacting to achieve what is important to us will become more concrete (Haas 240/428).

The parameters of the Joker's responsibility as leader is debated in the "Canadian Roundtable". This interview is a record of a roundtable discussion by Canadian Forum Theatre practitioners which took place in Toronto in 1991. The participants were Joan Chandler, Doug Cleverly, Eleanor Crowder, Simon Malbogat, Rhonda Payne and Julie Salverson. Augusto Boal, David Diamond, the artistic director of Headlines Theatre, and Lib Spry, the artistic director of Passionate Balance, contributed notes to the edited manuscript. The participants talk about their own experiences as Jokers and their concerns over issues of power. Mady Schutzman raises the question of who leads the process in Forum preparation:

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[26] The use of the word "quality" should be understood to mean the basic character or nature of the communication, or its distinguishing attributes. Teachers and students therefore define their own roles/positions in the group by their actions, not by pre-assigned definitions.

[27] Robert Barlett Haas, Psychodrama and Sociodrama in American Education, New York: Beacon House, 1949, 237/425.

> Schutzman: One thing I hear you asking is who leads the process. The very basis behind Theatre of the Oppressed is that the population we are working with leads, they provide the stories, they have the lived experiences. We come in as facilitators with a body of techniques to use at the appropriate moment. Our strengths, supposedly, include knowing how to use what when. If you're working with a group of people who are not providing leads that are . . .
>
> Cleverly: self-challenging enough . . .
>
> Schutzman: . . . yes, vulnerable and sensitive "enough," maybe they're not ready to deal with it. . . . Because then you're relying upon the techniques to draw the sensitivity out and so the techniques lead rather than the group (205).

If the workshop group who is creating a Forum play does not provide the material that will enable them to create a challenging piece of theatre does the Joker then use TO techniques to lead the group or is the group allowed to lead when the result may show that they were not ready to deal with the issues they apparently wanted to explore? Does the Joker not have the responsibility to challenge the vulnerability of the participants so that they will expose where they are with the issues, both personally and as a group ? Do the participants not have the ultimate responsibility for what they choose to do? Joan Chandler feels that the responsibility has to lie with the workshop participants:

> . . . The people who come into the workshops have things they want to change. We use techniques that trigger those things, those bad moments. Unless someone has horrible boundary problems, and I have not encountered anyone like this yet, they are not going to share or touch something that they don't want to share or touch. And when they cry it's a relief. When they share the pain with others who have similar pain, a real healing takes place (205).

Eleanor Crowder worries about the possibility of false concensus, when the group acts without everyone truly agreeing on the course of action: "Many times in this process people come out with a decision that appeared to be a consensus but that the group never really agreed to have happen"(206). Simon Malbogat calls this the "tyranny of the collective"(206). My inference from this phrase is that the manifest need for a collective to reach concensus becomes coercive in itself. For Crowder the question is , ". . . how much control by the animator [Joker] is necessary for the safety of the participants" (207). Shutzman raises the point that it may not be a bad thing for workshop participants or audience/spect-actors to come away feeling "broken" (219). The concern for emotional safety opens up the question of having support systems in place for people after the Forum. Doug Cleverly feels that a follow-up process needs to be in place beforehand because there may be "a bit of a mess left afterward because of all that has been stirred up" (220). Crowder's response is that, ". . . destabilizing leads to change, leads to political action, leads to revolution"(220). Joan Chandler reminds, "That's also a therapeutic concept" (220). The dilemma is that the Joker has tremendous power in Forum Theatre work which he/she must continually disseminate to the workshop participants and spectactors.

The Joker is also a participant and will suffer backlash from his/her work. As both bridge and bridger the Joker needs therapeutic maintenance. Crowder points this out:

> As facilitators, we are participants, too. But we have a different relationship to TO than the others. You can end up with one set of things happening emotionally to the facilitators and another quite different set of things happening to the other participants. We're beginning to realize that we have to plan different structures for each of these sets of experiences, a whole parallel structure for the facilitators in terms of coping with what has happened (203).

This roundtable discussion is, in fact, a therapeutic process for its participants.

Sue Jennings, a theatre director and Play Therapist, has pertinent insights on the role of the analyst in Play Therapy[28] (an application of psychodrama) which are relevant to the Joker's role. Her process of conducting a Play Therapy treatment is remarkably similar to the methodolgy of Forum Theatre (Part I, Chapter I). There is a presession where information about the child client is reviewed. Stage one is the warming-up period where roles and relationships are established and random play takes place. Stage two is development--engagement and interaction--where the therapist becomes a partner in the play process as actor, witness and co-actor. Stage three is where analysis and closure take place. Jennings gives attention to both the role and the person of the analyst. During the Play Therapy sessions the analyist's role is dramatic. She is a character in the child's play world and must be flexible to the child's needs. But she must also be aware of her personal internal states which feed into the play therapy process--both practice and evaluation. The analyst needs to be aware of the nature of her own internal child as well as her internal needs as a client. There are also internal supervisory voices: the voice of herself as a trained professional and of her mentors. There is the voice of the creative actor inside her. These internal states need addressing outside the work of Play Therapy. The analyst must care for and nuture herself.

This is the process the Forum practitioners were going through in the "Canadian Roundtable". Schutzman raises the point: "Sometimes I wonder if animators, jokers, whatever, have lost the connection with what it feels like to be the *protagonist* doing the techniques--how the experience of working on *our own issues*, not just empathizing with others'--affects an understanding of how the techiques are working, how we adapt them, how we change them, and how we dialog with people of different classes, races, cultures than our own"(220-221). Earlier in the discussion Crowder spoke of how jokers are also participants in TO, but with a different relationship to it and with different responses. She recognizes the need for jokers to have a structure in place for coping with what happens to them in Forum work. The self-reflexive nature of both therapy and Theatre of the Oppressed extends to the mediators, be they analysts or jokers. The Joker must be aware not only of her/himself in the role of mediator, but of what she/he brings to that role and what impact that has on each Forum situation.

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[28] Sue Jennings, Play therapy with Children: A Practitioner's Guide, Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications,1993. The following description of the role of the Play Therapist is summarized from this text.

SIMILARITIES IN THEORY

Parallels can be drawn between Play Therapy and Boal's latest reworking of his poetics of Theatre of the Oppressed. In The Rainbow of Desire, Boal borrows from Lope de Vega the following definition of theatre: "theatre is two human beings, a passion and a platform" (16). The platform is part of what Boal terms the "aesthetic space".[29] He notes that the Greek root of 'aesthetic' means "of or pertaining to things perceptible to the senses" (footnote on page18). The aesthetic space is the interpenetration of the stage space and the audience space. This space exists simultaneously in the physical here and now and subjectively as imagined and remembered time-space. "The aesthetic space possesses . . . properties which stimulate knowledge and discovery, cognition and recognition: properties which stimulate the process of learning by experience"(20). The first property of the aesthetic space is plasticity. Time, space, people and objects can be combined in any way because the space "*is*, but *doesn't exist*." It liberates both memory and imagination. The second property of the aesthetic space is that it is dichotomous or paradoxical. The actors are aware of being simultaneously in a space that is and in a space that doesn't exist. They become both the subject of the situation and the subject of themselves, and, in the act of recounting, can see what is recounted and can see themselves in the process of recounting. Thus the 'I' of the actor is many faceted, and theatrical fiction becomes real in the aesthetic space. The third property is that the space is macroscopic: every action, every word is brought closer and made larger. This allows the aesthetic response and knowledge, the knowledge of the senses, to flood into one's awareness of one's self. This awareness, coupled with dichotomous knowledge, allows the actor to see possible selves and the possibilities for change. In these ways theatre is therapeutic. In Forum Theatre the audience are actors, for they are invited into the stage space and may acquire new knowledge of themselves. They are not isolated from the platform, but are co-creators in the aesthetic space.

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[29] The following description of the "aesthetic space" is summarized from The Rainbow of Desire, 16-29.

Play Therapy also recognizes the aesthetic space. Adam Blatner writes: "Psychodrama integrates many of the elements of imaginative play in a form that adolescents and adults can also utilize in solving personal and group problems."[30]

> . . . The . . . advantage is that reframing behaviour as a type of role playing sets up a *role distance* between the actor and the role performed. It generates a self-reflective inner director and commentator. . . it is just this shift to a level of metacommunication, to a self-reflective position that is the essence of psychotherapy (Blatner 237).

This observation supports Boal's understanding of the dichotomous property of the aesthetic space. Cohen and Cohen discuss the conceptual world of play as a space of transition:

> The space that a conceptual world occupies can be conceived of as a liminal space, betwixt and between, or as a transitional space--neither entirely within the inner world nor bounded by the constraints of reality and the external world. As a type of transitional space, it is not governed by the rules of reality or fantasy and is a part of neither of them and both of them at the same time.[31]

The properties of the transitional space operate as does Boal's property of plasticity.

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[30] Adam Blatner, "Psychodramatic Methods in Family Therapy," Family Play Therapy. eds. Charles E. Schaefer and Lois J. Carey, Northvale, New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994, 235.

[31] Phyllis M. Cohen and Matthew Cohen, "Conceptual Worlds: Play and Theater in child Psychoanalysis," The Many Meanings of Play: A Psychoanalytic Perspective, eds. Albert J. Solnit, Donald J. Cohen, Peter B. Neubauer, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, 94.

Eugene J. Mahon offers a definition of play that responds closely to Boal's assertion that theatre is learning through experience:

> A working definition of play . . . would suggest that play . . . is actions that . . . seek . . . to explore alternate or multiple possibilities of experience. . . . If action has a complicated history from its birth in the reflex arc to maturity in decisive behaviour, . . . it nevertheless has a creative workshop called play where the future can be worked on before it happens. . . . it is . . . the crucible in which make-believe reaches toward belief and doubt advances toward conviction.[32]

Sue Jennings marries play to theatre:

> . . . I have always taken the significance of play as implicit in the development of drama and of the capacity for human beings to create and re-create. . . . The dramatic imagination . . . is an essential part of being a human being--of being a person. . . .
>
> People often comment that play is not important because it is not *real*--something which is also said about drama! The reverse is in fact true. Because play and drama are not 'real', they are therefore *crucial* to human survival.[33]

THE THEATRE/THERAPY DEBATE

As similarities between Psychodrama, Sociodrama, and Theatre of the Oppressed are clear it is natural that Theatre of the Oppressed is being discussed as a therapeutic technique.[34] In 1990, Boal did not interpret his work as psychotherapy: "it is necessary that all the singular elements of individual discourses become symbolic and lose their exclusivity. In this shift from the particular event to its social context, we abandon psychotherapy for theatre".[35] In my view, the 'theatre or therapy' debate was the major impetus for Boal's reworking of his poetics of Theatre of the Oppressed in The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy. Boal had implied that psychotherapy is an individual affair and theatre is a social affair. His new poetics moves towards inclusiveness rather than distinctiveness. In the practice of TO, evidenced by the discussion of the Jokers interviewed in the "Canadian Roundtable", there are concerns about privacy, personal boundaries, emotional vulnerability, appropriation, volition, coercion. These words relate more to psychology than theatre.

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[32] Eugene J Mahon, "Play: Its Role in Child Analysis, Its Fate in Adult Analysis," The Many Meanings of Play: A Psychoanalytic Perspective, 174-175.

[33] Sue Jennings, Play therapy with Children: A Practitioner's Guide, Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications,1993, Preface ix, x.

[34] See Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism, eds. Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

[35] Boal, "The Cop in the Head: Three Hypotheses," The Drama Review 34:3, Fall 1990, 37.

The question of 'theatre *or* therapy' or 'theatre *and* therapy' is important to Jokers and their understanding of their responsibility for the workshop group or audience. Questions about theatre and therapy have relevance to both workshop and performance processes. In the discussion of this issue, the workshop experience and the performance experience often overlap. Sometimes the play created in the community workshop will not be taken to public performance but will be kept within the confines of the group which is creating it. Alternatively, a play may be presented publicly which has not been created through the community workshop process. Companies and individuals in Canada work in both these ways. It is probable that the workshop process which creates a Forum play for its own private exploration is closer to therapy than is a Forum play which is presented to the larger community or general public.[36]

Despite the relationship of the Joker's role to that of the therapist in Psychodrama, Sociodrama, and Play Therapy, Canadian Jokers are uncomfortable with the perception that they are therapists or "fixers". Rhonda Payne and Joan Chandler discuss this issue in the "Canadian Roundtable":

> Payne: . . . What worries me about the Theatre of the Oppressed, and about

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[36] In Part II of this thesis there is a reference to Tessa Mendel offering an example of using Forum with a group which had been working on the issue of date rape. At the beginning of their workshop process they covenanted together to provide a secure environment to share personal experiences. Their roles and relationships were formalized in terms reminiscent of Feldhendler's description of the parameters of a therapy process. The purpose of this Forum was not to reach outward into the community, but inward to increase the participants' understanding of and relationship to the issue.

> various concepts of facilitators and jokers, is that we're starting to assume the role of fixers. And we're starting to move into the role of therapist, particularly with Cop-in-the-Head stuff. I think it's endowing too much to the theatre. Theatre for me is only one step in the process, a tool to be used in certain kinds of processes for change. It is not the process in itself.
>
> Chandler: Who do you perceive as a fixer?
>
> Payne: Boal himself is presenting the theatre and the theatre practitioner as a fixer--particularly with the Cop-in-the-Head, which I think is psychotherapy. I don't accept that.
>
> Chandler: I wouldn't accept that either. Theatre is not the fixer(217).

The debate is apparent; its terms are unclear. Payne does not see TO as a process for change in itself but as a tool of a larger process. Much of the rhetoric around this issue is based on conventional labels, on assumptions of the meanings of the terms used. For example: is it responsible to equate the term "fixer" with therapist and then apply it to Boal as does Payne? The basic assumption is that TO is theatre--but it is not traditional theatre where the audience and actors are separate bodies. Forum Theatre is a tool, a process, and a product which effects education, social change, and emotional healing in a far more active way than conventional theatre. The Joker, as facilitator and director, functions beyond conventional parameters. The debate over the functions of the Joker--theatre director and/or therapist; educator and/or activist-- is treated in Part II, Chapter IV.

PART 11

THE PRESENT PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIAN PRACTITIONERS

CHAPTER 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND FORUM PRACTITIONERS INTERVIEWED

THE PRACTITIONERS

During the research phase of this thesis I set out to discover how many Forum practitioners there are in Canada. My first contacts were the two people who have been most influential in Theatre of the Oppressed work in this country: Lib Spry, the director of Passionate Balance Theatre in Ottawa, and David Diamond, director of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver. Spry and Diamond gave me the names of more practitioners and my list has multiplied to thirty-six Jokers. People are using Boal's techniques and adapting them to their own needs in a variety of situations. Most practitioners doing Forum Theatre in Canada have been introduced to the form by either Lib Spry or David Diamond. Some have studied with both Spry and Diamond, as well as with Augusto Boal, either at workshops in Canada or abroad. There is a world-wide network of Popular Theatre artists who do this work, so while Forum Theatre has its own unique applications in Canada, it is not isolated from methods of Forum Theatre in other countries. Boal operates training centres for Theatre of the Oppressed in Paris and Rio de Janeiro. Headlines Theatre is the B.C. centre for Theatre of the Oppressed[37], acting as a conduit for the relay of news and information from the centre in Rio de Janeiro. Because of the world-wide network of practitioners, international and regional conferences of Theatre of the Oppressed have been held in different countries[38]. The next international conference will be convened in Canada, hosted by Mixed Company Theatre of Toronto, May 23 to June 8,1997.

The following list gives the names and locations of those Jokers who contributed to this thesis by answering twelve questions specific to the Joker's role:

Lib Spry, director of Passionate Balance Theatre, Ottawa, ON.
David Diamond, director of Headlines Theatre, Vancouver, BC.
Saeideh Nessar Ali, with Headlines Theatre, Vancouver, BC.
Jacquie George, with Headlines Theatre, Naniamo, BC.
Patti Fraser, co-director, Alchemy Theatre Lab, Vancouver, BC.
Lina de Guevara, director, Teatro Puente, Victoria, BC.
Rick Campbell, Calgary, AB.
Kathleen Foreman, University of Calgary, AB.
Arlin MacFarlane, Yukon Educational Theatre, Whitehorse, YT.
Warren Linds, director, Just Us Players, Regina, SK.
Tessa Mendel, Halifax, NS.
Rose Adams, Port Lorne, NS.

In addition to the12 specific questions, other, more general questions, were answered by these Jokers as well as Nock Gail, Berlin, who came to a Headlines workshop; Kate Wilkinson, Target Theatre, Victoria, who works with Lina de Guevara; Luciano Iogna, Toronto, who has worked with Passionate Balance, Mixed Company, and facilitated individual projects in eastern Canada; and Julie Salverson, Toronto, who has worked with both Lib Spry and David Diamond as well as facilitated her own projects.

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[37] Headlines Community Chronicle Edition #3, November 1993:

"Augusto Boal, originator of the Theatre of the Oppressed, asked David if he would agree to Headlines becoming an official Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO). After consulting with Lina de Guevara, the Director of Puente Theatre, David agreed. Headlines is now CTO for British Columbia.

What does this mean? We will function as a conduit for information from CTO Rio (Boal's company) and people who are interested in this work throughout the province. Periodic mailouts will happen. . . . We join Centres in France, Brasil, India, Sweden, Ontario and Switzerland who are commited to exploring the boundaries of the Theatre of the Oppressed and to ongoing international exchange."

[38] International Conferences: Rio, 1993; Paris, 1991; Burkinafaso (Ivory Coast), 1989.

These Jokers provided a wide range of experience and expertise for this study. Some have been doing Forum Theatre for more than ten years; others have begun their work more recently. Some do Forum Theatre exclusively; others do different forms of theatre as well--both Popular and traditional. For some, their Forum work has been directed by and to a specific community; others have done more public work; some do both. A few of the practitioners have reservations about the effectiveness of Forum work, others insist that whatever comes out of a Forum Theatre performance is dynamic and will reverberate beyond the event itself.

THE QUESTIONS

The following questions were addressed by the twelve Jokers listed above between the dates of May 31, 1995 and July 6, 1995. Each question is given here followed by focii which describe the range of probable answers I anticipated, as well as relevant quotations from Boal's discussion: "Forum Theatre: Doubts and Certainties", Games For Actors and Non-Actors, (224-247), for the purposes of comparison to his original model. The questions were designed to be open ended to encourage the Jokers to respond with stories from their own joking experience.

1. What are the factors and circumstances which you consider when you choose to do Forum Theatre rather than other forms of Theatre of the Oppressed or Popular Theatre? Would you offer an example of a Forum Theatre project and why Forum was appropriate for this project.

Focii: - appropriateness of the format of direct audience interventions

- appropriateness of the content of the play for Forum exploration
- the make-up of the audience and its relationship to the issues being presented
- the needs of the actors
- the physical circumstances of the performance

Boal's thoughts relevant to this question refer to the content of the play or 'anti-model'. He differentiates oppression "against which one can struggle" and aggression "which one cannot evade." In a dramatized situation where there is no possible escape for the victim except through violence then there are no alternatives to be explored. "Consequently, when the model presents an aggression, the only answer is resignation because all the possible courses of action depend exclusively on physical strength. What is even more pernicious is that this totally demobilises the spect-actor" (Games 226). Boal's explanation implies that Forum Theatre is counter-effective when the model presented to the audience shows aggression rather than oppression.

2. Boal is clear on how the Joker should procede in facilitating Forum. From your own work as Joker, can you tell me what you have found to be the most important choices/stratagies/techniques in carrying out this role? Does your style of performing Joker change according to circumstances? Can you illustrate this?

Focii:
- essential functions of the Joker vs contextual (event specific) functions of the Joker
- the function of style: personal attributes of the Joker vs role to be played
- skills needed
- how the Joker's personal intent is utilized/managed

Boal's description of the 'conduct of the joker' has been outlined in Part I, *3. The Joker negotiates a contract/agreement between the spectactors, her/himself, and the actors for the playing of the game of Forum. Please describe what the terms of agreement (ie. procedures, roles, etc.) were in a Forum project you facilitated and why these terms were important for this particular project.*

Focii: - essential terms vs contextual (project and/or performance specific) terms

Boal talks about the rules for intervention: ". . . only spect-actors who are victims of the same oppression as the character (by identity or analogy) can replace the oppressed protagonist to find new approaches or new forms of liberation. . . . If a spect-actor who is not experiencing the same oppression wants to replace the oppressed protagonist, we manifestly fall into theatre of advice; one person showing another what to do--the old evangelical theatre"(Games 240-241). Boal also insists that a spectactor must respect the given social circumstances and motivation of the character they are replacing.

4. Please detail how you negotiated this contract/agreement. Do you state the contract/agreement explicitly or is it implied in the interaction of the spect-actors, Joker and actors? Why?

Focii: - the method by which agreement is reached between the Joker/actors/audience
- recognition of expectations
- the relationship between the Joker/actors/audience

Boal describes his typical warm-up routine with an audience. First he explains Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre as part of that process. He states the rules of the game [Forum] that will be played. Next, the audience participates in some group exercises and then Image Theatre. Finally, the actors present the 'anti-model'. "I have in the past used, and seen others use, other less effective processes--starting immediately with exercises, with an explanation *a posteriori*. In these cases, I have noticed that a portion of the audience feels manipulated and reacts negatively. By contrast when the explanation comes first, the joker almost always ends up winning over the audience, and gaining their acquiescence and their confidence" (Games 236).

5. What needs to be in place (pre-contract) before the event to make the contract/agreement possible? How do you determine objectives which can be shared by the spectactors, Joker and actors?

Focii:

- sponsor's goal and objectives
- expectations and assumptions of participants
- physical set-up

6. How do you get the spectactors ready to participate in Forum Theatre? At what point do they enter into the event?

Focii:

- warm-up process
- how and when the audience engages beyond polite appreciation

Boal's example of his warm-up process is given (for question four) above. He offers two differing examples of how the audience is engaged:

> . . . the warm-up is [not] absolutely essential. I believe it prepares the spect-actors for action. In any case, the thing which will best prepare them is really the subject matter and the play itself. The case of Het Trojaan Paard, a Belgian group from Antwerp, is significant; they have performed the same show, about the woman who is 'a leader at work, a slave in the home', in a hundred towns in Belgium and Holland, without ever doing the slightest preliminary warm-up. They just explain what is going to happen. And the show is so evocative and so galvanising that all the spect-actors always want to take part (Games 236).
>
> One . . . example, from Perugia, a little Italian city . . ., the first case of 'vertical' participation! . . . I worked with a group of women . . .

> and in the evenings we would play . . . scenes in forum on the . . . squares in the town. . . . I noticed that the windows were bulging with spectators, mainly women, who wanted to see the show. So I shouted to them to come down, to 'facilitate' their participation. A good number of [them]. . . descended. The others pretended not to have . . . heard. I persisted, then gave up; they stayed comfortably parked in their armchairs.
>
> The show began, as always, with exercises. Then came . . . the images of the family and the ritual of coming home from work. At this point the women started barracking . . . heaped abuse on these husbands who, on stage, were exemplary husbands . . . 'Malcalzone! Liar! You're not like that here, you've never been in a kitchen in your life. Lazy buggers!'
>
> The volubility of the Italians is such that in a few moments the whole place was in uproar . . .
>
> No one in that square had remained a 'spectator'; they had all been spect-actors, sitting, standing, far away, close by, up above and down below . . . (Games 244-245).

7. How do you deal with a breach of contract/agreement--either by an individual or the group?

Focii: - what constitutes a breach of contract/agreement

- dealing with a breach publically vs privately

Boal's caution that the subject matter of the play must be dynamic and relevant to the audience makes sense in view of keeping the audience engaged and focussed. He does describe a Forum in which a 'breach of contract' ocurred. In this instance, a man replaced a woman protagonist (victim of oppression) and proceeded to act in a manner that made it clear that he was showing all the women present how they should act. The women in the audience were quick to then replace the male antagonist in the play and show how he should act. A theatrical dialogue of great value took place on this occasion. "This episode also taught me something else; the Theatre of the Oppressed does have its rules, and these must be respected. But if, by chance, the audience at a particular moment and for a particular reason decides to change these rules, then you change them. Nevertheless the only rules which the Theatre of the Oppressed cannot alter are its two fundamental principles: spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action and these spect-actors must prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives" (Games 242).

8. In bringing a Forum to a close, what principles apply? What techniques do you apply to those principles? Can you give examples of your choices in ending Forums?

Focii: - time constraints vs natural rhythm of the event

- final impressions for the audience

Boal answers the question of when a Forum ends this way: "Never--since the objective of the Theatre of the Oppressed is not to close a cycle, to generate a catharsis, or to end a development. On the contrary, its objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity to change spectators into protagonists. . . . Theatre of the Oppressed is located precisely on the frontier between fiction and reality--and this border must be crossed. If the show starts in fiction, its objective is to become integrated into reality, into life" (Games 245-247).

9. How do you evaluate the success of a Forum event? (in terms of personal responses, the means or contract, and the collective response and what is created in that time and place)

Focii: - formal evaluations

- gut responses

- ongoing effect

10. Has your style/approach as joker changed over your experience in doing Forum?

Focii: - changing circumstances

- new understandings

11. In much of the literature about Theatre of the Oppressed in the First World context, there is a debate about whether Forum, instead of being empowering or liberating, can in experience, be troubling or even oppressive. I would be grateful if you would comment on this with example(s) from events with which you have been associated.

Focii:
- oppression by form
- oppression by content
- oppression by association[39]

The closest Boal comes to dealing with this question is cited under questions three and four above.

12. With reference to the debate of individual therapy vs social analysis, how do you handle individual disclosure in Forum interventions? Do you welcome it? Discourage it? Can it be validated and also serve as a springboard to allowing a process of social analysis and the possibility of social action?

Focii:
- viewing Forum Theatre as a continuum with therapy at one end and social action at the other

Therapy Education/Outreach Social/Political Action
Forum________|____________|________________|_____________Forum
Theatre Theatre

<-----(Dramatic Activity/Performance)----->

---

[39] I mean by this that a person in the audience may be troubled by the emotional responses of other audience members.

- individual action vs social action
- the effect of public witness

The question of therapy is not raised in Games For Actors and Non-Actors. In Boal's new work, The Rainbow of Desire, Andrew Jackson explains Boal's new identification with therapy:

> In the Rainbow of Desire there is another continuity with the preceding work, which is located in Boal's desire to democratise, to demystify, processes which have become the sole province of 'professionals'. Having democratised theatre, now he works on democratising therapy. . . . If everyone can and does act, as demonstrated by Forum Theatre which relieves audiences of the obligation to be passive, perhaps everyone can also play a part in the therapeutic process--and perhaps they can play the largest part themselves. Here the 'patient' is not a passive recipient of treatment, but . . . is the director of his or her own therapeutic process, with the presence of a participating audience acting as a multiple mirror to enable new and multiple readings of past (and always present) events (Translator's Introduction xxii-xxiii).

POINTS TO CONSIDER IN FRAMING THE RESPONSES OF THE JOKERS

The original enquiry which was to form the basis of this thesis was: how does the Joker negotiate and mediate the contract which allows the game of Forum Theatre to occur between an audience and the actors? Eight of the twelve questions were formulated about the contract, or the mechanics of the Forum. The Jokers interviewed were not as interested in the questions about the contract[40] as they were in the question about why they do Forum, the therapy/social action debate, how their individual styles of joking have changed, and the question about individual disclosure.

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[40] Some of the Jokers interviewed took exception to my interpretation that there was a contract in effect during the Forum event and that the Joker was the agent of that contract. David Diamond and Saiedeh Nesser Ali, in particular, felt that a contract was rigid and binding, antithetical to the purpose of Forum Theatre. Other Jokers recognized the idea of a contract being valid in a workshop situation, but in a performance situation, the relationship of the Joker with the audience should be flexible and responsive.

I had deliberately chosen not to use the word 'safety' in any of the questions formulated because my personal interest is in the dynamics of the audience becoming actors, in the spontaneous creation of theatre. Nevertheless, the safety of the participants was a concern undercutting many of the responses I received. It is apparent this question is still paramount and I now believe it is integral to the present perspectives of Canadian Jokers.

The questions formulated for discussion regarded Forum Theatre as performance with an audience whose members are anonymous. However, the Canadian Forum Theatre practice reported here falls into two catagories based on the creation process of the work: 1) plays developed by professional actors and/or writers for Forum presentation and 2) plays developed in a workshop process by non-professional actors. The workshop processes used in Canada are largely derived from the Power Play model[41] developed by David Diamond and Headlines Theatre, which is in turn adapted from Boal's model for developing Forum Theatre in Games For Actors and Non-Actors[42]. The first creation process entails doing research on a particular issue, often identified by the sponsor of the Forum presentation. This research includes interviewing people who have experienced the oppression under examination. A representative script is written from their stories which allows for 'intervention points' which may trigger audience involvement to explore different solutions to the problems presented. The second creation process culminates in a play which serves the same function as that produced by the first method, but it reflects the collective process of a group of workshop participants who draw on their own life experiences and, with the guidance of the Joker, develop their own script through improvisation techniques. This play is then performed using workshop participants as actors. In this second instance, the creation process becomes part of the Forum experience and the Forum itself may have a further impact on the workshop process if it continues beyond the presentation of the play. The focus here is often more on the workshop participants than it is on the audience for the Forum event. The 'participants', then, may be the workshop actors, the audience, or both these groups. I have included a precis of each practitioner's work in Appendix I.

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[41] In 1984, David Diamond became the artistic director of Headlines Theatre. During this year he also met and worked with Augusto Boal in Europe. When he returned to Vancouver he began implementing the Forum Theatre process he had observed and practised in Europe with Boal. This process is outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Diamond called the Forum Theatre workshops "Power Plays". A Power Play workshop generally lasts five days and culminates in a Forum play which is presented to the host community. In 1991 Headlines developed a manual entitled: "A Joker's Guide to Power Plays" as part of their Power Play training program. The manual was revised in 1994.

[42] See summary in Chapter I.

When the questions were originally mailed to the respective Jokers I requested that they send me written responses, or, if they preferred, do an interview by telephone. I was able to interview five Jokers in person. Of the remaining seven, all but one were telephone interviews. This method of data collection had considerable effect on the content of the interviews. First, the interviewees had access to all the questions before the interview. Their answers to any one question were often influenced by thoughts which related to other questions as well. I rarely received any answer that did not go beyond the scope of the question asked. Second, as eleven of the twelve responders chose verbal interviews, the data was received as conversation. There are few thoughts expressed in complete sentences and the thought processes utilised are associative, not linear. My analysis is based on the cumulative effect of all the conversations, and how individual insights contribute to the accumulated knowledge. The following discussion will explore the themes which were raised by the practitioners interviewed in response to the research questions, supported by quotations from those interviews.

Before treating the responses of Canadian Jokers, it is useful to note, that, as their perspectives on the role and practice of Theatre of the Oppressed are changing, Boal's own perspectives are changing concomitantly. Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism is a representative example of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) practitioners grappling with the controversies of their work in the North American context. This re-evaluation of the goals and effects of TO began with Boal himself, as his practice began to change radically when he was exiled from Brazil in 1976 and began his work in Europe:

> Before coming to Europe, I had done a lot of Forum Theatre, in a number of Latin American countries, but always in 'workshop' situations, never as a 'performance'. Here in Europe, at the time of writing [1991], I have already done several Forum Theatre sessions as performances. In Latin America, the audience was generally small and homogenious, the spect-actors almost always being the workers from one factory, the residents of a particular neighbourhood, the congregation of a church, the students of a university, etc. Here, besides that kind of 'workshop' forum, I have also done shows for hundreds of people who didn't know each other at all. This is a new type of Forum Theatre, which I began to develop here, with some very positive results (Games For Actors And Non-Actors 18).

Adrian Jackson, the translator of The Rainbow of Desire, writes, in the Translator's Introduction, of this book being the "latest staging point" (xviii) in a journey which is a cumulative process:

> The Cop in the Head/Rainbow of Desire techniques are . . . a response to experimental practice; these are not supported by a single story but by a repeated perception, during a period of European and North American exile from Brazil, that participants in Boal's Forum Theatre workshops were frequently asking if the work could deal with oppression where there was no visible, tangible, present oppressor. . . . Boal's transplantation to the West brought him into contact, particularly in his workshops, with people who found it less easy than peasant and worker groups he had worked with in Brazil and other Latin American countries to synthesize their experience of the world into the sort of Manichaean equation suggested by the terms 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'; this confrontation--and the resulting proposition by groups of 'emptiness', 'fear' and the like as fit 'oppressions' to treat with this work--led directly to the invention or discovery of the Cop in the Head/Rainbow of Desire techniques (xviii-xvix).

While Boal may see his journey as cumulative; the experience of Canadian Jokers is tangential. This difference may be due to the fact that Boal has thirty years of practice behind him; Canadian Jokers have a little more than ten. Boal's journey has been one of discovery; Canadian Jokers' journeys have been of application.

CHAPTER II

THE RANGE OF FORUM THEATRE WORK AND THE LINKS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

The first question Canadian Jokers were asked was: why do Forum Theatre?; when is it appropriate to do Forum? Their answers reflect the considerations listed in Part I, Chapter II, and give the range of how they approach their work. Their answers also show how their work has changed from Boal's original model of Forum Theatre outlined in Games For Actors and Non-Actors.[43] Rose Adams responded with four conditions, a qualification, and a summary statement for doing Forum which serve as a useful framework for considering the responses of the other Jokers. Her criteria are specific to her own practice as Joker but also relate to the criteria of the other Jokers interviewed.

> I would like to do Forum when:
> a) I think the audience would be sympathetic towards the oppressed characters in the Forum piece;
> b) when the search for "solutions" or interventions is accompanied with time for group or audience reflection and analysis rather than seeing one solution after another speeding by;
> c) when the conditions are such that audience/or group members would feel secure enough to give interventions that are real;
> d) when it seems a reasonable way to work--with a "solution" piece[44] .
> If the group one is working with, or showing the piece for, is in an initial stage of forming, perhaps a theatre piece telling their own stories, or

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[43] See Chapter I of thesis.

[44] A "solution" piece is another term for "anti-model", a play that is designed to present a problem that is unsolved. The play is structured so that the large problem is incrementally contributed to by smaller problems. These smaller problems, if are addressed, might, in turn, have an effect on the larger problem. Each small problem presented in the play may be considered a possible intervention point for the spectactors, a place in the story where different choices can be made so that cause and effect become apparent as the characters respond to new actions. A "solution" piece would also have a clearly portrayed protagonist (the person struggling against oppression) and a clearly portrayed antagonist (oppressor). The spectactors' role would be to find ways for the protagonist to defeat the antagonist and to solve the problem of oppression.

> reflecting back to them their lives as a tool for building a group is more appropriate than a Forum piece. It all depends upon the goals of the piece, the needs of the group, and the context.[45]

Adams' last statement, "the goals of the piece, the needs of the group, and the context," summarizes the different perspectives each Joker offers in answer to this question. These perspectives are not discrete; they intersect each other.

There were two further considerations. Lina de Guevera, while explaining that she will consult an audience as to whether or not they wish to do Forum on an issue[46], insists that not all issues can be explored effectively through Forum Theatre. She gives the example of a play about racism:[47]

> It expressed ideas, but there was nowhere for the audience to intervene; there was no clear oppressor; it was too generalized. So we did the play and then did another scene where there was a clear example of oppression and people could do something practical. It worked well for Forum Theatre. It depends on the nature of the issue and the nature of the audience: every audience is right for Forum but not every subject is right. There has to be the possibility for practical solutions, the possibility for change.

de Guevera supports a criterion listed by Adams, that the the piece needs to be a "solution piece", that it offers the possibility for solutions to be enacted. Her most emphatic criteria, however, is that "each topic has its own way of doing Forum and you adapt to that topic. It is something you discover as you are doing it. You can't know what will happen beforehand." The other consideration, which may be considered one of 'context', is cited by Lib Spry, : "some kind of controlled circumstances". Her company was asked to perform at a children's fesitval. The venue was inappropriate, with children continually running in and out. It was possible to do interactive theatre, but not Forum. Spry's experience of needing some kind of physical controls coincides with Adams' desire for time to analyse and reflect on interventions. De Guevera echoes this concern, calling it the "need for privacy and concentration". She tells of an experience performing at UBC in an open space with stores around the perimeter. People were continually walking through the space. The context of the physical set-up prevented the work of the group being understood by the bystanders because of the distractions of other activities occurring simultaneously. These examples show how "the goals of the piece, the needs of the group, and the context" intersect.

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[45] Context may include everything from the physical set-up for the performance to what has occurred in the creation process to who the audience is to what the sponsor(s) expect from the Forum event. This 'context' is what I was referring to in Question 5 about the 'pre-contract': *what needs to be in place before the Forum event?* This would include, from Adams' list of criteria, the time factor, the sense of security (fostered by a group-building process which has taken place prior to the Forum), and audience sympathy with the oppressed characters.

[46] De Guevera, when performing Forum with her company, Teatro Puente, often presents a number of scenes (up to twenty) and allows the audience to choose which ones they want to take to Forum.

[47] Both de Guevera and Saiedeh Nesser Ali are immigrants to Canada and do not see racism as something that can be treated by Forum Theatre. Racism is ideological. Ali explains: ". . . when we talk about racism I do think white people don't understand. I have no problem saying that because they are not of color; they don't know what it means. They understand discrimination . . . there's a difference and sometimes I get into a horrible thing and now I've decided not to talk about it." In de Guevera's example, my understanding is that the scene worked for Forum because it was based on discrimination, discrimination between oppressed and oppressor based on racism.

David Diamond offers a representative example of what he considers the 'needs of the group'. He described a recent Forum project where the choice not to do Forum with a piece was made part way through the workshop process. The issue chosen to be addressd was the impact of residential schooling on the native community. The workshop was held at an alcohol and drug treatment centre which was originally a Catholic residential school where many of the participants had been students. In this case, the choice of topic had been made before the workshop began and was informed by the setting. Two pieces were developed: a historical piece, set at the residential school when the participants were children, and a present-day piece where some of the characters were the adult children of the characters of the first piece.

> The first one was horrific--the piece in the school. We broke for the day and over-night I went down this path of realizing that we should not do Forum with this piece; it was wrong to do Forum with the first piece and I knew why: . . . you can't change the past and there was the potential for us to really traumatize people all over again. . . .

> So we [David Diamond and Jacquie George] came the next morning and I said, "Folks, I had a thought." And I explained where I was coming from. And they all went, "You're absolutely correct". . . everyone agreed we would perform the piece as . . . agit-prop to set the context for the second piece.
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> So, in fact, the group had done the exactly what it needed to do and part of the process . . . was realizing that we shouldn't do Forum . . . on that piece because it would be bad for the community. So we showed the community the first piece and it was extremely emotional and it laid the context for the second piece because the second piece on its own could be any family dealing with family violence . . . it's only when you understand the connection to the first piece, fifty years previous that the Forum makes true sense.

There is a similarity between Diamond's residential school experience and de Guevara's racism experience, in that, though the dynamics of the subjects are different, their choices not to do Forum (but still perform the plays) were based on the unsuitability of the topics in allowing useful interventions, which would ultimately frustrate or harm the audience. This unsuitability confirms Boal's caution that Forum Theatre is about exploring alternatives to oppression, not about reliving aggression.[48] The goal of the piece, in Diamond's example, was to provide a context for the Forum which would explore present family abuse. This goal was drawn from the needs of the group and was influenced by the context of performing the play for a larger community. The effect of this Forum on the larger community will be discussed in Chapter III, "The Issue of Safety for Participants: Defining Safety."

The practice of Forum Theatre has general goals and project-specific goals. Originally, the general goal was to mobilize "the people" to find and practise solutions to a specific problem, which would then be implemented in real life.[49] In the Canadian context, where 'oppression' is not commonly talked about,[50] what relevance does Theatre of the Oppressed have? Rick Campbell grapples with this question: "I've got different ways I look at Forum. . . in a more education context as opposed to social change, more to look at different behaviours and different ways of approaching situations as opposed to working with a group of people who would label themselves 'oppressed'." His concept of "different entry points" is an interesting adaptation of 'sympathy for the oppressed characters'(Adams, above):[51]

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[48] See Chapter III: the quotation of Boal with reference to Question 1 asked of the Jokers. Does this concern for the audience relate to the issue of safety for participants? To retraumatize the audience would render it impotent; the audience would not be able to move on to dynamization, the purpose for doing Forum in the first place. Boal asserts: ". . . when the model presents an aggression, the only answer is resignation because all the possible courses of action depend exclusively on physical strength. What is even more pernicious is that this totally demobilizes the spect-actor." In the case recounted by Diamond, the children in the residential school had no recourse against the priests.

> I think that there's a benefit from *seeing and intervening from another place*[52] as opposed to getting down and saying, how can we change this situation? . . . I guess the other part too--who is the piece being developed for? You're talking about the heterogeneity or homogeneity of an audience. If the people who are seeing the play are quite similar to the people who created it, then I think there's more of an opportunity to do a Forum that is going to be effective in the way that I think Boal intended it to be: to sit there and share in the reality of what's happening and then start to strategize for change. The more difference in the audience, the more difference [there is] in perspectives around issues of oppression, about understanding other people's situations. Then I think that it's harder; then I think that it can be useful, but the purpose really changes.
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> . . . for me it's just understanding what the different entry points are and how they work. I know some people who do this kind of work and have this clarity of vision about what the work should be and how it has to work and the way it should be done. For me, I don't think it's ever been that clear cut. It's not always Theatre of the Oppressed, but there are scenes I use all the time where the audience intervenes where there's some person being oppressed in the scene, but given the nature of the audience, I don't think it's the same as doing Theatre of the Oppressed in

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[49] "In order to understand this *poetics of the oppressed* one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people--"spectators," passive beings in the theatrical phemonenon--into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action. . . . the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or to think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change--in short, trains himself for real action." Boal, Theater of the Oppressed, 122.

[50] In the "Canadian Roundtable" the difficulty of using the term 'oppression' is discussed:

Payne: . . . I'm, using terms like discrimination and barriers now. . .

Chandler: Those words make sense to us; they're part of our everyday vocabulary. Oppression is not (Playing Boal, 213).

[51] See also quotation from Richard Courtenay in Part I,Chapter I, Footnote 10.

[52] my emphasis. "Another place" refers to a different perspective based on different life experience. An analogy would be "walking in another person's shoes" (Courtenay).

the way it's intended to be done.

The factors Campbell considers relate to the considerations listed in Part I, Chapter II: the needs of the group to practise different entry points; the goal of the piece to educate; and the context, the make-up of the audience, its heterogeneity.

Sometimes the term 'Theatre of the Oppressed' is alienating in his affluent urban centre.

> *So do you use the term 'Theatre of the Oppressed'?* It depends where I'm working. A lot of times I'm where if you mention the word 'oppression'--in corporate Calgary you're in the 'oilpatch'--people just don't hear it or they'll shut right down. . . . The work I'm doing right now with the Sexual Assault Centre, . . . and places like that where there is a clear identification that some people here are 'oppressed', then I use it all the time. I even switch the words ' popular' and 'participatory', depending on how it's going to be received, 1) so I can be heard and 2) so people understand what it is I do and what they want to do.

Campbell has raised the issue of "doing Theatre of the Oppressed in the way it's intended to be done." There is an implication that there is a 'right' way to do Forum Theatre, that there is an ideology of Theatre of the Oppressed which must be adhered to. The changing perspectives of Canadian Jokers are, in some respects, reactions against what has been perceived as an inviolable model or, possibly, against Boal himself. David Diamond spoke of the changes he has made in playing the role of Joker: "A couple of years ago I realized that I couldn't be Augusto. We're different people; we have different histories; we live in different cultures. . . . I've stopped doing his work and it's very freeing." As Boal's own work is constantly metamorphizing, so is the work of Canadian practitioners. De Gueverra speaks to this:

> I think Theatre of the Oppressed is what you make of it. . . . it's not a dogma; it's a tool and you can use it in whatever way you want and if you don't like parts. . . what else would you do?. . . .I read the article that that

> woman wrote about Manitoulin[53] and I was at that workshop. It was a very harsh criticism about Boal personally and my impression is: if you are with a teacher, first of all, you can go, you can learn from [him]. Whatever you don't like about what this teacher is doing, you don't have to do it. . . like, . . . if I don't agree with Boal pointing out to people when they are doing a magic intervention, then I won't do it. Boal is not standing behind my shoulder to see whether I do Theatre Forum exactly the way he does it. The first thing Boal said is, "You can use this; you can do whatever you want with it." People do whatever they want with the Forum; they use it in whatever way they want. . . you don't have a set of rules on it; you can take of it whatever serves your purposes and what you don't agree with you can change, which is what I've done, not because I don't agree with it but because the reality of the work has shown me that I have to change the way that I do the Forum. Every play that I've done, every Forum piece has been different in terms of format--they're not big, big differences but there are some differences. I think I've discovered some really useful ways of empowering the audience, of respecting the audience, just by listening to them.

When Campbell speaks of using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, even Forum, but not actually doing TO for social change, he speaks of a practice that resonates with other Canadian Jokers. I suspect that this distinction has to do with the Canadian ambivalence with accepting either the concept or the reality of oppression as a part of Canadian social culture, much less as the essential dynamic of its social and political structures[54] . Boal has a mission; he is a revolutionary. He literally puts his life at risk doing the work he does.[55] Jokers in Canada do not work under the same conditions.

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[53] Eleanor Crowder, "Lessons from the Rainbow Circle", Canadian Theatre Review 74, Spring 1993, 51-53. This article is described in the CTR table of contents as: "Augusto Boal holds a workshop in Manitoulin Island and Eleanor Crowder assesses the fall-out." As implied by the by-line use of the word 'fall-out' the article was very critical of Boal's manner in conducting the workshop which was based on his Rainbow of Desire work. The Manitoulin workshop experience will be discussed further in Part II, Chapter III.

[54] Spry writes in her article, "Structures of Power": "All the power structures that allow the third-world reality to be maintained so that the first world may enjoy its standard of living can be found in our society. The "isms" abound in Canada: sexism, racism, chauvinism, heterosexism, agism, classism; they all exist in our daily relationships. While most of us can and do exercise some choice in our lives, we are all part of power relationships that allow dominating and expoitative structures to maintain the status quo. Often people are so alienated from their reality that they are unable or unwilling to recognize what power they have or where they stand in the hierarchy (Playing Boal, 173).

Warren Linds speaks of using Forum as a vehicle for exploration that goes deeper than intellectual discussion. His company prepared a play about employment equity:

> Forum, in that case, was appropriate because it brought out the subtle things that people could pick up on and if you just showed a play, I don't think the subtle things would come across. You might be able to talk about it but it allowed us to explore many different things that were happening, many different levels of exploitation, that I think wouldn't have been as strong in another form of Popular Theatre.

In my own work with 1000 Hertz at the CAASHHE Conference[56] we found that our adaptation of Image Theatre to instant Forum, was extremely useful in exploring the subtleties in sexual harassment issues. Our goal was for the participants to renew their personal connections to the dynamics and issues of sexual harassment and to renew their commitment to their work as sexual harassment workers. The idea of exploration, creating and animating physical images, proved to be non-threatening and worked well as a conscious goal for all participants. There was no drive to find solutions but rather to see how the dynamics of a situation would shift when different strategies of action were applied. Kathleen Foreman was in the audience at this mini-workshop and gave some useful feedback:

> . . . you said that what it was going to be was an 'exploration'. I think that's an invitation to explore, I don't think the expectation of exploration is a very threatening one. So if your expectations are to explore and

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[55] Boal is presently a member of the legislative assembly for Sao Paolo. He is using TO techniques to develop what he is calling "Legislative Theatre". A newsletter from CENTRO DO TEATRO DO OPRIMINDO DO RIO DE JANEIRO dated June 20, 1994, states: Boal himself had the drawer of his table at Meeting Room of the chamber, which is a place where laws are made and theoretically, a highly secure place, violated twice; twice a puppet representing his Mandate was burned in the door of his office; once his car had the tires blown and twice his camionette was stolen. But last week, the worst happend: Hermogenes (a poet) and Reinaldo (a lawyer) who worked in Office of Jurema Batista, a Vereador of the Worker's Party, colleague of Boal, were killed: seven shots for each, by a professional killer. This shocked us extremely, not only because they were very dear friends of all of us, very worthy persons, valuable PT members, but also because this can be the begnning of an escalade. On the same weekend, on Sao Paulo, two other militants of the PST-U (another Party of our coallition) were killed in their home, and two militants of the cause of the landless peasants were kidnapped in Mato Grosso and Acre.

[56] See Chapter 1, "Personal Experience as a Joker."

> discover--those are far less threatening than expectations to find solutions because that places the responsibility on the audience for finding the right answers. . . the pressure will stop them from participating.

It is evident that there is no single purpose for doing Forum Theatre as there is no single way of doing it. Tessa Mendel has two different contexts in which she does Forum Theatre. In the first case the emphasis is on skill development for the audience and allowing audience members to try things out for themselves. She gives an example of young people doing a Forum on drinking/drug use, where they have the opportunity to act out saying "no" and try alternative solutions to succumbing to peer pressure. The second instance is when she is working with a small group and doing Forum is part of a process in looking at an issue. An example would be working with a group long term on the issue of date rape. In this context the audience for the Forum would be other workshop participants. Mendel's two examples have an educational component, but the second situation involves a deeper exploration of an issue.

In all the cases referred to the common denominator is that Forum Theatre is educative; it allows people to experience new perspectives. The opportunities for learning are greatest for the participants of a workshop. Patti Fraser described a three week project she had just completed with the Youth and AIDS Society in Vancouver. The group were volunteers doing peer education and identifying other HIV positive youth to offer them support:

> They were working on lots of different levels, so in terms of the workshop, the first question I was asking them was: . . . what were the barriers or problems that they saw that were preventing them from working with a certain kind of joy and passion in their work? Some of them could grab that but most of them went immediately to their lives and started dealing with the AIDS and HIV issue and the despair that was around it and the powerlessness that came up from that. So most of the image work that kept being created was what I perceived, and what many of them were perceiving, as internal forces . . . having gone to this place with them, I felt it was very necessary that they started to identify external forces that are operating out there that are truly oppressing

> them around this issue; that they had taken everything and internalized it . . . it was like we had to go on this journey internally and then externally, and then from that we went to Forum, because Forum, in terms of a project like that is a very forceful and rejuvenating experience for them . . . it was way for them to come out of that journey, that process; to go from their [personal] investigation to understand that it's an investigation of the community as well.

Fraser's dilemma, in facilitating the process of this group, was that they were stuck internalizing the issue they were facing and could not find a way to work beyond the level of personal powerlessness. The presentation of the Forum piece was the final step that allowed them to move beyond their personal needs to understanding the needs within their community as AIDS workers.

Kathleen Foreman spoke of a Forum project which was formally educational as it was offered as a University course. The process the class went through is similar to the process Fraser recounted in the AIDS project. In both cases, the participants needed to go through personal exploration before they could go on to look at the larger dimensions of the issues with which they were dealing. Foreman's project group explored the relationship between gender and power. Her major concern, because she was dealing with young students who had "not connected this issue to their lives", was that the process of accessing personal experience would be safe for the group members and that bringing their collective work to performance would be a positive experience. The group was of mixed gender and her strategy was to have the class explore power dynamics within their own gender groups first.

> What was interesting was that their experiences tended--and I think this was a way of them keeping it safe in this preliminary exploration--they tended to be incidences from childhood. So the issues of oppression that were presented and ultimately taken to Forum [within the workshop] were kind of in the raw state of children; they were't very subtle. . . . All of our follow-up discussions looked at how we treat members of our own gender in terms of power and there was a lot of understanding gained. It seemd to pave the way and to give them a sound basis from which to explore, in mixed groups, the relationship of gender and power between the genders. . . . because they looked at it in children first, things were very clear and what they discovered as the other pieces took shape, was

> that the behaviour was becoming more subtle and the manipulation more creative, that they were dealing with the same stuff, just on an adult level.

Foreman's project fulfilled her general and specific educative objectives: University course requirements; accessing personal experience and using it to create theatre; encouraging the participants to educate themselves about the issues of power and gender at the University. The general objective was not to foment social change, though that might be an indirect result of the work of the class. In the students' exploration process they went from accessing their own personal experiences of gender and power to relating these experiences to larger structures. This exploration allowed them, as Campbell would call it, "different entry points" into the issue they were debating.

In summary, the strongest link between the work of the different Jokers is their concern for the 'needs of the group'. It is up to the group to define their goals, and up to the Joker, working with the group, to address their needs in achieving the 'goals of the piece'. The plays, as de Guevera observed, develop their own form from the subject being treated, and that form may not be suitable for Forum Theatre. Spry's condition that there be "some kind of controlled circumstances" was specific to Forum performance, but this condition is also necessary in a workshop situation, as is what de Guevera called the "need for privacy and concentration". While Boal talks about the large Forum events he has joked in Europe, the Jokers interviewed work on a smaller scale. They do Forum work which is similar to Boal's earlier work in Latin America, tailored to the needs of a particular group. In many cases, the social action mandate is tempered to one of education. There are two models offered by Boal: the workshop and performance with/for a particular group, and the public performance event. Canadian Jokers tend to follow one model or the other although Headlines does occasionally take a Forum piece which has been developed through their Power Play process and tour it publicly.[57] Canadian Jokers use the forms and exercises of Theatre of the Oppressed, first of all, to serve the needs of the group in achieving the group's goals. As de Guevera says: "People do whatever they want with the Forum; they use it in whatever way they want. . . you can take of it whatever serves your purpose and what you don't agree with you can change. . . ."

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[57] Headlines toured "Out of the Silence" to native communities in BC and then produced a televised Forum with Channel 10 in Vancouver. They are planning to tour the Forum plays developed at the Meares Island workshop which are discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE ISSUE OF SAFETY FOR PARTICIPANTS: DEFINING SAFETY

In the quotation from Foreman above, safety is shown to be a conscious objective in teaching the University course on Forum Theatre.[58] Her experience and concerns provide a starting place from which to understand what safety means to Canadian Jokers: how our cultural experience informs our perceptions of what safety means in the preparation of and the event of Forum Theatre.

When the final scenes came to performance Foreman was gratified with how well the students performed, with their understanding of the issues, and with the degree to which they were willing to take risks as characters in responding to the interventions. For her, the willingness to risk was a measure of the sense of safety that had been fostered in the exploration process:

> [They] were able to take intervention, on intervention, on intervention in a particular moment and hold their ground and hold their character and be affected by the intervention . . . .I felt that at that point, that as participants, they were very much in control of the process and very much understood the process. It validated the Forum for me because I had left it alone for a number of years just believing that it was too risky. . . . I think taking people to Forum who aren't ready is cruel. They need to work from a base of creative confidence so that it never becomes personal for them or the people who are intervening. . . that they're going to be able to ground themselves in the fantasy and live it truthfully but always with the discipline of the performer.

Foreman highlights her concern for the safety of the participants in the group. On one hand she values risk-taking as proof that the participants feel safe; on the other hand she talks about distrusting Forum because it is "too risky". She requires that the actor/intervenor, with the "discipline of the performer" maintains a distance from personal reality, staying "grounded in the fantasy" and "able to live it truthfully". Her concern is that the action of acting/intervening in a Forum is risky in itself. Jacquie George offers a different perspective. In response to Question 12, about individual disclosure during a Forum performance, she responds:

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[58] Foreman: "I wanted very much to make this process safe for people. I realized that would be my ultimate goal."

> That's something we saw over and over again. Some of the intervenors that came up and did things--they'd never disclosed to anyone anything that had happened to them--all of a sudden they're up on stage, which for them is a safe place because it's somebody else's story, . . . and they get up there and they find out it's okay to say something and they just go on from there.

In George's experience, the spectactors feel safe because the stage is not reality. They can access their personal experience because the Forum evokes the aesthetic space. Foreman's concern about safety is for the vulnerability participants may feel in exposing their personal experiences in a public situation. These two views bring into question what is meant by fantasy and by reality. Boal addresses this question in his explanation of what he calls the "aesthetic space", using the word 'fiction' to denote 'fantasy'.[59] Adrian Jackson adds a footnote to Boal's discourse: "Convention craves that, in the case of the protagonist-actor, the actor be the 'I-now', and the 'I-before' be only a character, a fiction. But we know very well that fiction does not exist, that everything is true. This applies to an even greater extent in the theatre, where even lies are true. The only fiction is the word 'fiction'." The dichotomy Jackson refers to is behind Foreman's concern. While the play is fiction, what occurs on the stage is real action in real time. This is where the power of theatre lies. If the real action causes the actors/intervenors to lose their sense of the fiction, they risk emotional vulnerability. Georges's perspective is that because the aesthetic space is both fictive and real, intervenors are freed to reveal their personal experiences because it is physically safe to do so. The "I-before" can be acknowledged because the intervenor is freed in the "I-now".

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[59] Boal, The Rainbow of Desire, 23-27. I have summarized his explanation in Part I, Chapter II of this thesis.

In Part II, Chapter II, the idea of retraumatization was mentioned by Diamond in his account of the native residential school workshop. This is a specific term, meaning that a person who has been abused will be thrown back into reliving an actual abusive situation. 'Safety' is more nebulous, and in the example given by Foreman, does not refer to retraumatization, but rather to personal volition in risking emotional vulnerability. George, in contrast, is talking about physical safety. The aesthetic space is safe, the real world is not. An adult intervening on behalf of a child being physically abused in the aesthetic space is not at physical risk as he or she may have been when they were a child. That intervenor is freed emotionally (to some extent) from the past by taking action in the present even though the story is not his/her own. De Guevera offers an observation that gives perspective to concerns for safety, both physical and emotional:

> I don't think there is individual disclosure because . . . it is all related to that moment . . . . I think of one thing that somebody, who works in this field said: "Theatre doesn't do damage to people; the damage is already out there in society, in life." And I think that's true. In Brazil--when we were there for the festival--Brazil, which is a horrible society . . . nobody was concerned about this type of thing. This is an incredible luxury that we are talking about because people have to live in very, very harsh conditions, so nobody's going to think that going to a play is going to be damaging or you're going to be traumatized; you have enough trauma in daily life. People do not live obsessed with their little personal problems because if they did they would just collapse because life is so, so hard. So what people are trying to do is find a way of having the best time they possibly can at any given moment. They take to this kind of theatre like a fish to water. I've never seen people lining up to intervene--maybe that's why Boal didn't do any analysis--because if you have ten people lining up waiting for the chance to go and show their solutions to the problem . . . ?

De Guevera's experience in Brazil makes Canadian Jokers' concerns about safety seem indulgent. Yet she is as careful as any other Joker to care for the emotional and physical needs of the audience by having support people present and making sure everyone knows what the Forum is about. Her point is that safety is relative to the circumstances of society.

How is the term 'safety' to be defined? There is a wide diversity among Canadian Jokers in this debate. Some Jokers focus their concerns towards the actors, some towards the audience. The quest to define 'safety' may be aided by asking the question: safety for whom?

There are three players in the game of Forum: the collective group of actors, the Joker, and the collective group of spectactors. While the participants are treated as a group, safety is experienced on an individual level. Safety is something you feel. It is possible to know you are physically safe and to still feel discomfort within yourself. When most Jokers talk about 'safety' they are talking about individual discomfort.

SAFETY FOR THE SPECTACTORS

In Forum, the goal is that two groups of people work together to explore possibilities for action, mediated by the Joker. This is done physically, by the spectactors coming into the playing space. This may be an uncomfortable situation, particularly for an audience who has a traditional understanding of western theatre, where they sit anonymously in the dark, while the stage and actors are lit. To enter the playing space is to become exposed to the eyes of others. To overcome this feeling of discomfort many of the Jokers talked about strategies to 'break down the fourth wall' between actors and audience. This is one of the tasks of the Joker and actors: to bring the spectactors into the playing space, inviting them in, giving them permission. Spry talks about "defus[ing] the fear that immediately comes as soon as you start talking about interventions. There's always this fear, so part of your job is to break that down." Campbell gives one technique for breaking down the barriers between the audience and the actors:

> Quite often the actors will start by playing improv games they've learned and giving the audience control over starting and stopping the action, by playing an improv game of "Freeze" where they [the audience] can freeze the action whenever they want, so they're yelling 'stop' just like they will eventually in the Forum.

De Guevera interprets the preliminary discomfort of the audience differently:

> Usually people get very excited when I tell them they are going to come up on stage. They laugh; they like the idea. It is a moment of excitement or almost rejoicing. If they are a bit reluctant to participate I freeze the action and ask, "Do you agree with what is happening on stage?", and they will always say, "No." I say, "If you don't stop it it's going to continue. Now it's up to you to change it." That is a line I use, and afterwards some people say that is the most important thing they learned, that it's up to them to stop it.

Spry talks about the audience being afraid, de Guevera talks about them being excited, almost joyous, reluctant and challenged. I have observed this reaction from my own joking experience, and from what others have told me, believe there is a difference between being afraid of something that will be done to you over which you have no control and the terror/excitement /joy one experiences before commiting to an action which is risky but which one wants to take. The point is that emotional excitement is to be expected; the critical condition in Forum is that the spectatctors must know that whatever they do is their own choice.

Jokers have talked about situations where the audience has been coerced into making interventions. This is unanimously denounced and something these practitioners are conscious of avoiding. Their concerns are about less obvious abuses of their power as Jokers. Campbell offers the perspective that there is a difference between finding Forum oppressive [or unsafe][60] and finding the subject of the work oppressive.

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[60] Campbell's comments are in response to Question 11 where I asked if Forum could be "troubling or even oppressive".

> It can be very troubling. I think a lot of the reason this work has so much trouble being accepted by people is that people don't often see themselves as being oppressed. It's not usually in a Canadian's vocabulary, no matter what class somebody's from or what their experience is. Going in using that kind of language can be very disturbing for people and cause a lot of resistance to looking at things in that way.
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> The form of Forum itself, if it's not used properly, can be very oppressive: It can be awful for some of those people who feel coerced into coming up on stage. People can feel coerced into coming up on stage . . . .
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> The work should always be troubling; the things we're looking at are troubling. I don't think they should be oppressive. I think they can unintentionally be very oppressive. I can think of some of the things I did when I first started out. I did, perhaps, silence people in the audience, or cut things off because of my own discomfort.
>
> I think it can be oppressive very unintentionally--I guess that's how people would see most oppression anyway. I think it's not always empowering or liberating and can sometimes leave people with the feeling like, "This is one big dirty hole we're in and there's no way out." That's the thing about 'opening the can of worms': by showing the Forum you're not creating that situation--sexual harassment, sexual abuse, racism, sexism--all those things are there already. . . We're making people look at it specifically and I don't think that's oppressive. I don't think seeing a play about racism is oppressive; I think racism is oppressive. So I think there's a real difference there and I think there's a lot of discomfort for people because of the issues you look at with Forum Theatre.

Whether people's discomfort is due to the subject matter or the form of theatre, there is quite a range of feelings which might be called 'unsafe': uncertain, discomforting, reluctant, troubling, disturbing, lack of control, excited, risk, coerced, oppressive, fear, retraumatize, are all words that have come up in the discussion. Campbell's distinction is important because it helps Jokers see their own positions more clearly: the subject matter is not within the domain of the Joker to mediate; the form is.

Fraser has pointed out another possible aspect of Forum Theatre that needs to be considered under the aegis of safety: voyeurism. In traditional western theatre, an audience may be considered to be voyeurs, and are sanctioned as such: they enjoy the trials of the protagonist vicariously.[61] The actors are paid to be observed, to act out the drama on the behalf of the audience. It is the actors' art that brings the drama to life. This process is what Boal considers to be Aristotelean catharthis.[62] Forum Theatre is opposed to the passivity of the spectator as vicarious observer and is commited to the action of the spectactor as subject of his/her own dramatic action. The actors in a Forum piece, if they are not professional actors, are also the subjects of their own dramatic action because the drama is based on their personal stories. If they are observed vicariously, without the acknowledgement of payment, then the dynamic becomes problematic, doubly so if the actors are children, for voyeurism is then more clearly associated with exploitation. Fraser spoke of a Headlines Theatre event she was part of and that I was witness to. This event was the televised Forum of "Out of the Silence".[63]

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[61] This interpretation of traditional western theatre may be offensive to some people. I employ it for the purpose of this particular analysis, which is based on Boal's perspectives. This view, which is the basis of his poetics, is part of the historical understanding of Theatre of the Oppressed, and thus influences the perspectives of the Jokers interviewed.

> I think it is very important not to create Forums that in some way sensationalize emotional situations. . . . I think a lot has to do with who you are showing this to. . . it ["Out of the Silence"] was shown on television. I remember being asked to deal with the telephone calls that came in from the people watching this and we were getting calls from children watching this all over the province, that wanted somebody else to enact an intervention on their behalf. And for me, "Out of the Silence"-- it just felt inappropropriate to be a public-- *Because it became voyeuristic?*[64] Yeah, okay. There's a difference between voyeurism and authentic witnessing.[65] For some issues I think you have to create the true and honest conditions of authentic witnessing and if you can't create those conditions then you fall into voyeurism whether you know it or not. It's very seductive because it's great drama--but drama at the expense of who or what?

My own perspective, from being in the studio audience at this event, was that it was problematic. There were few interventions from the audience. As audience, we were watching interventions that were being enacted by adults on behalf of the "children" who called in on the phone lines. I didn't exactly feel like a voyeur, but I did feel that the intervention process was interpretive rather than active. The medium of television, which is passive and vicarious, overtook the process of Forum which is meant to be immediate. I was uncomfortable. The people who were doing the interventions on behalf of the children who called in, were, in effect appropriating the wishes of those children and making theatre for consumption out of those wishes. As I was there in person, I was a witness, but not an 'authentic witness' because the interventions were not authentic, but interpretations. To some extent, I was not an authentic witness because I am white. I certainly felt it would have been inappropriate to make an intervention, taking on the role of an oppressed native person. If I had been at home, watching on television, and not personally connected to the issue of family violence in the urban native community, I suspect I would have felt more like a consumer or voyeur.

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[62] Boal's poetics are in a large part a response to his understanding of Aristotle's poetics in which the main function of tragedy is to effect catharthis or purgation of anti-social feelings.

[63] See Chapter I, "Personal Experience as a Joker."

[64] My use of the word 'voyeuristic' encompasses the ideas of invaded privacy, exposed secrets, vicarious identification more than a specific sexual perversion.

[65] Authentic witnessing is a subject presently being treated by Julie Salverson. I am as yet unaware of any papers published by her on this subject, but it promises to be relevant to the issues of safety and the therapy/social action debate. This term is Salverson's own, and though there is no published definition for it, one should take 'authentic' to mean true or real, and 'witness' to mean someone who can testify on behalf of another. The term is thus related to Adam's use of 'real' and of 'sympathy'.

Lib Spry speaks of her concerns regarding radio and television Forums:

> [Forum] isn't safe . . . and it's up to the practitioners to know that and to create structures that allow for people to have support systems. We're talking about doing it on the radio here and I have to sit down and think this through very carefully. I would not, for example, ever put a thing about sexual harassment on the radio. . . *radio is just that one step removed from having to be responsible for what you do and say --[with regard to television Forums}*--I find that very problematic--more than radio because that leaves the person with their own voice. Because I know, and I've done it, that if somehow the actors had a telephone connected to their heads when they're on stage; that might work. But I find--I hear someone saying something to me, how it comes out from me is different because I'm me, and that needs to get acknowledged.

The question that is raised by this issue is: if members of the audience are not 'authentic witnesses' to the issue being addressed by the Forum, do those audience members then become agents of oppression towards the members of the audience who do identify themselves as 'oppressed' in relation to the issue being addressed, and to the actors who are presenting the play which has been drawn from their life experiences?

Does the presence of voyeurism constitute a lack of safety for intervenors or actors? This is possible, and could be one dynamic which underlies Foreman's concern about vulnerability for actors and intervenors. The issue of voyeurism may also be behind Adams' first condition that the audience be sympathetic to the oppressed characters.

Boal explains the difference between '*sym*-pathy' and '*em*-pathy':

> With the other participants of the group *[Salverson's 'authentic witnesses']* there occurs a kind of inverse phenomenon. Though they are outside observers, observing from a distance, by virtue of the *sym*-pathy created with the protagonist they become empowered to penetrate into his lived experience and they travel within this protagonist, feeling his emotions and perceiving analogies between their own lives and his, when they exist--and they almost always do exist (only then will there be genuine *sym*-pathy and not mere *em*-pathy). And so they will recognise the points of view of the protagonist and his perspectives.
>
> This phenomenon does not appear in the conventional theatre, since the intransitive relation which holds sway there does not allow the protagonist to respond to a spectator who challenges him. In such a circumstance, the spectator feels as if he is in front of phantoms to which he must surrender empathetically, since transmission is one-way, from stage to auditorium (empathy)[66] , without the reciprocal possibility of communion, of dialogue (sympathy)" (The Rainbow of Desire, 26-27).

The issue of voyerism (Boal's 'empathy') and the meaning and practice of authentic witnessing (Boal's 'sympathy') have still to be debated by Jokers.

SAFETY FOR THE ACTORS

As Jokers have spoken of their concerns for safety of the audience, they have also expressed concern for safety of actors. For those Jokers working with the workshop creation process, group-building, through theatre exercises, is the first step in learning to work together, in developing trust. This is true in the model devised by Boal (Games For Actors And Non-Actors). Group-building is not a discrete step in the process of developing a Forum piece; it continues throughout the whole process and should grow stronger the longer the group works together. In order to understand what safety means in this context, it is useful to note what could undermine safety: physical hazards, violence, judgemental attitudes, cliques, isolating group members, lack of confidentiality, betrayal of secrets, grudges, lack of emotional support. Any of these factors could be brought to the group by the participants or develop beyond the control of the Joker/facilitators. The process of group-building in a Forum project, is not, however, just to provide safety; it is to provide a work environment in which theatre can be created. Moreover, group-building is not the responsibility of the group leader alone; the process must be entered into willingly by all the group members.

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[66] Boal defines 'empathy' in his early poetics: "From the moment the performance begins, a relationship is established between the character, especially the protagonist, and the spectator. This relationship has well defined characteristics: the spectator assumes a passive attitude and delegates the power of action to the character. Since the character resembles us (as Aristotle indicates), we live vicariously all his stage experiences. Without acting, we feel that we are acting. We love and hate when the character loves and hates" (Theater of the Oppressed, 34).

Mendel offers some terms of agreement which she feels are important in working with a group in a workshop process:

> Usually we've negotiated a contract right at the beginning. One of the very first things we do is talk about what are everybody's objectives for the workshop: what are people's fears, what kind of agreement can we make to make it as safe as possible to make people's fears not become realized and their objectives realized? It depends on the group, but things like: that they don't want to be judged, that they want to be able to disagree with each other, that people want to be able to speak in the first person. . . , that the group is responsible for their own safety and asking for what they need. . . . We've already set that up before the introduction of the Forum and the Forum continues with that agreement.
>
> . . . there are so many assumptions made and this is a way of making it much more fully participatory, because I think--I suppose this is jumping to number 11, that thing about whether it's empowering or oppressive--to me it's very strongly related to whether there's some kind of equality in the group.
>
> . . . I'm actually quite uncomfortable when Forum is used in a situation where I don't think there's safety. I feel quite strongly about it, about not working in those circumstances, except, as I say, when you're doing it on subject matter where the Forum is a little lighter, a little easier.

Equality which encourages mutual respect is necessary when people begin to share stories. In Mendel's direct response to Question 11 she speaks of collectivising personal stories:

> I do think that it can be oppressive and I do think there's a big responsibility on the part of the people who are doing it [Forum]--the facilitator mainly, but also the actors--to be aware of that, especially [when]. . . people give up a story that's very powerful and important and personal to them and because of the reflective process they feel that they lose ownership over it. It's a delicate thing. I do think that the collectivising of personal stories is an important element but I think there's got to be some kind of way to give something back to the person who gave that rather than, "Oh, this is for us to work on."

Mendel infers that people can be taken advantage of when they make themselves vulnerable by sharing their personal stories. Campbell concurs but distinguishes between oppression and risk:

> The nature of the work is very personal and it requires people to take great risks, which means that they can be vulnerable, which means that somebody who wants to can take advantage, can be oppressive. That's true of any kind of creative process. I don't think there's anything special about Forum or TO that opens itself up more to being oppressive than other kinds of situations, other ways of doing Popular Theatre I've seen. This work is maybe more risky than doing other forms of Popular Theatre but I don't think it's any more oppressive.

There is a tension between what the individual participant must take responsibility for, what the group must take responsibility for, what the Joker must take responsibility for. The lines between these areas are not clear and will likely depend upon group composition, the issue being explored, as well as the Joker's personal beliefs. Foreman feels so strongly about the Joker's responsibility in ensuring safety, and the difficulty of doing that, that she stopped doing Forum Theatre for a time. When she recently began to practice TO again it was with the understanding that, as a Joker, she was responsible for whatever occured in the workshop process:

> You can't ever assume you know what you're doing. . . . How do you make it safe for people to do this work?, so that they don't get scarred by a theatre game, for god's sake. . . . in Forum there is a level of working with the images that is much more primal than language and things can happen

> very spontaneously which releases stuff that can be very disturbing. As the facilitator you have to acknowledge when that happens. You have to have enough wherewithal to deal with it when it occurs. . . *You can only be responsible for so much.* But you are responsible: you're making it happen. You're not responsible for people's past lives but you are responsible for accessing that stuff. You're asking people to go to that place and you have to be prepared to pick up the pieces.

Other Jokers would disagree. They insist that they can not take on the role of therapist, to "pick up the pieces." De Guevera offers a different perspective:

> I think that [personal disclosure] can come up in a workshop situation. . . you have to give the people the support they need if the exercise, as a group, requires some kind of disclosure. What I always do is tell people that they don't have to share anything they don't want to share. . . and I respect peoples' choices. If they want to work with something that is very close to the bone they can; it's their decision. . . . The only thing you can do is say to people, "This is what we're going to do: you are free so you can share whatever you want to share and if you don't want to share something you are not forced to do it." But if somebody wants to do it you have to respect people. You cannot say, "No, no, no, no, you poor thing." No. How can you do that? . . . it bothers me that there is sometimes too much intervention in other people's positions. If you decide that you want to deal with this, and dealing with it makes you cry, but it was your decision in the first place, nobody pressured you. . . whatever choice they make is going to be respected.

The difference between Foreman's view and de Guevera's view is that for Foreman, personal disclosure is unsafe because it is spontaneous, unplanned. de Guevera accepts disclosure as part of the workshop design, where it is always the conscious choice of the participant.

In the performance, the dynamics for the actors are different than they are in the workshop situation. They are no longer in a secure environment. Their security must come from within themselves, from the other actors, and from the Joker. This change of environment is what led Forman to remark earlier that: "I think taking people to Forum who aren't ready is cruel." This is where the workshop process is put to the test. Campbell makes sure that his actors know "beforehand that they don't have to do anything they don't want to do"

> --that's from the first time we start working together and continues even when we're performing. They have the right to stop things if somebody is doing an intervention they can't handle or they don't understand or they find hurtful.

McFarlane speaks about an instance when she forgot to tell an intervenor that if [he] was going to use violence it had to be in slow motion:

> Anybody can yell, "Stop, " at that point--the actors, the Joker--I know, that as a Joker, I certainly feel out there to take care of my performers; I really feel for their vulnerability. I feel very much out there to try and protect them . . . .

Actors in a Forum are not helpless; they are taking risks but they are not unsafe unless, as Campbell cautions: "[You] are presenting to people who have more power than you in some ways or might be your oppressor in some situation. I think that. . . [might] not be a bad reason for not doing Forum with some groups." Linds relates an experience where the actors worked together to deal with an intervenor who was a potential oppressor because he was in a position of authority over them:

> There was this case where a teacher replaced a student and it's interesting how the students dealt with it. . . David Diamond joked [the scene] . . . it was obvious when [the teacher] got up he thought it was a real snap and he could solve this problem. The students weren't having anything of that and they wouldn't let him win at all. . . they really wanted to prove to him that his attitude wasn't very useful.

Linds goes on to explain that these students, in refusing to accomodate the intervenor in responding to his intervention as their characters would, were, in practice, oppressing the intervenor. They were responding to the teacher's attitude, not his intervention. They chose to use their own motivation, not the characters' motivation. This is an interesting example of the use of the aesthetic space, where the fiction of the play and the reality of the relationship between the actors and teacher showed the dichotomy of the teacher's intervention and the students' response to that intervention. In real life they would not have stood up to the teacher, in the aesthetic space they could. In this instance, Campbell's anticipated problem was not realized because the students did not allow the teacher to succeed with his paternalistic attitude.

Campbell, McFarlane and Linds make clear that the actors in a Forum have ways of protecting themselves, either through using the 'stop' mechanism or through their actions as actors playing characters in response to the interventions, as the students did in the story above.

Fraser tells about one participant who chose to identify himself and his true story to the audience during a Forum event she facilitated. The actor was showing that he was no longer the character, a victim of oppression:

> . . . one of the pieces was a story of one of the participant's real life experiences when he was told two years ago--after he found out he was HIV positive--at Canada Trust, to leave that day and not say anything to anybody and not say goodbye. . . . I asked Christopher beforehand, "Okay Christopher, do you want to identify yourself? What do you want to do?"
>
> So we got Christopher, which was very powerful theatre, as well as powerful anything, to stand up in his scene, his set, when he was in the teller's cage, and say, "This is my story; this happened two years ago." And for the audience to clearly see that's not who that person was any more: that was him two years ago; that's not who he is now.
>
> There's stuff around Forum , I know, . . . about victimizing victims who are victims. Christopher is not a victim. Christopher was a victim at that moment [in the scene]; Christopher is not a victim of life. I think that is an important part of Forum Theatre, that as Joker you don't create Forums where the victims are still the victims.

Fraser is talking about the crossover between actor and character, the "I-before" and the "I-now" described by Jackson earlier. If an actor was revictimised playing a character who was a victim, this would be an oppressive act. For example, if Christopher had not stated his relationship to the scene from his past he could have been perceived as still being a victim. When the validation of the "I-before" and "I-now" of a character/actor is actualized, Boal's 'sympathy' is invoked. In Fraser's story about Christopher, what she says about truth is realized: "It's the process [of the workshop] that legitimizes the product: if you do say that this is really from your lives and that you really do know what is going on, it's a validation of your experience. . . the truth comes out and the audience always recognizes the truth." The potential for the validation of the workshop actors as individuals struggling against oppression, not as victims, is important for most of the Jokers interviewed.

In a sense the Forum event is a battleground. The protagonists, both actors and intervenors, fight against oppression. The battle is between social roles, not between individual participants. The concern for safety arises when there is a physical hazard, such as when an intervenor becomes violent,[67] or when a participant's personal experience overwhelms her or him unawares. The lines between the responsibilities of the players for maintaining safety--actors, Joker, and audience--are described by choice. If the Joker chooses to be responsible for the actors and audience they will not be able to choose for themselves.

Apart from Foreman, none of the Jokers stated that they had personally experienced a feeling of being unsafe as participants in a Forum workshop or event. The concerns about safety have been on the behalf of others. Unless a person makes his/her feelings on his/her own behalf known, the assumption of lack of safety is hearsay. This assuming attitude is what prompted de Guevera's frustration in her earlier defense of Boal's method of conducting the Manitoulin Island workshop (Part II, Chapter II). Crowder stated:

> "For him, audience and players come to the Theatre of the Oppressed as adults who risk no more than they are ready to. The methodology is deliberate, . . . it is a pressure cooker designed to create personal discovery in the context of political analysis. "Spectactors". . . support each other by their shared witness but they leave separately to grow into their new selves in their own new lives. What remains unclear for us is what new lives Augusto expects people to walk into. . . . To say as Augusto

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[67] Spry recounts an occasion where a spectactor became violent: "One of the things I make a joke about that is very, very true is, "These are actors up here and we are looking for non-violent interventions, and please remember that.". . . *That's interesting* . . . it's important because at one point I didn't do this and I had someone hit an actor--it's not just interesting, it's necessary."

> does, "I make theatre; what you do with your life is your business" is not enough. I find myself morally at odds with an intention to provoke pain without a clear stragegy for action. . . . *For several participants in the Rainbow circle, there is now the conviction that no one should do Theatre of the Oppressed* (CTR 74, 51-53)." (my emphasis)

De Gueverra is not the only person to have taken exception to the article. Julie Salverson wrote in a letter to CTR:[68]

> I was disturbed by Eleanor Crowder's recent article describing Rainbow Circle. . . . Although I appreciate the concern many artists and popular theatre people have about the effects of emotional and provocative work on participants, I think we can credit ourselves with far too much ability to disturb. . . . I wish we'd been bolder in naming our problems, but instead we were indirect, as is this article. . . . I don't think this kind of innuendo helps discussion of our work. . . .

Rick Campbell talked about his frustration with the hearsay aspect of the discussion in "The Canadian Roundtable".

> Everybody does not go away happy: there's anger and fear and sadness, and all those things are part of this work and they all belong there. Just because someone's crying doesn't make it a less useful process--and I think it's often seen that way. *Have you read the "Roundtable" interview in Playing Boal?*. . . . I think that part of what bugged me about that--they're all talking about people that are facilitating these processes. . . but what always gets missed is, what's the experience of people? Oftentimes they think because they are working with oppressed groups or marginalized or whatever people want to call them, they tend not to see that they [the 'oppressed'] can make choices about whether they want to do this kind of work, whether they don't want to do this kind of work, how deeply they want to get involved or not involved. People make those choices all the time.
>
> . . . I think it's valuable for Jokers and facilitators and creators who do this professionally, to ask those questions, but when they're the only ones at the table I think there's a real level of understanding missing. Where are the people who feel they're being abused by this process? Let's talk to them. Where are the people who have loved this process and got a lot out of it and feel more connected to the world because of it?

My own experience with criticism of Forum Theatre bears out what Campbell refers to. Those people who have critized the dynamics of the Forum to me, or criticized the style of the Joker, have all been Popular Theatre practitioners. They speak on behalf of others they assume to have been harmed but never have articulated their personal experience of feeling unsafe. David Diamond recounts this dynamic occurring during the Forum of the Native Residential School project.

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[68] Julie Salverson, Letter, Canadian Theatre Review 76, Fall 1993, 71.

> At the Meares' Forum: in the middle of the Forum, a big guy came up and replaced a little girl who was being abused by her stepfather. He just sat there on the bed and I went up to him and said, "You don't have to do this." And he said, "No, no, I want to do this." He got under the blanket and the Dad came and started to stroke him. And from under the blankets he started to shake and from under the blankets we hear this big, "NOOOOOOO!" That's all he wanted to do. He got up and he said, "I never had a chance to say No in residential school." It was a very therapeutic moment for him and for the community. He went back and the Forum stopped. It's hard to describe the power of the moment: people had to speak. . . .
>
> One of the counsellors in the room, a white guy, jumps up, and he says, "I have to stop this. I think this whole thing is really abusive. We can't make the kids responsible." And he'd gone some place totally different. "We can't make people who were kids in the Residential School responsible for not having said, "No." We're not laying guilt trips on people." He'd gone down this whole other path.
>
> Ray [a Band Counsellor and Alcohol and Drug Counsellor] leapt up on stage. They know each other and Ray said to him, "Sit Down! You Sit Down! You Sit Down and you Shut Up!" He was furious. And he said, "You people for too long have been telling us, have been stopping us from feeling our own pain. We're old enough, we're adult--we can feel our own pain.". . .
>
> He [the white counsellor] had misunderstood. Nobody else had misunderstood, and many, many people have talked to me about it. It was an ugly moment. He later came, in public, at the end of the Forum and made a huge apology to the community. His position as a counsellor was incredibly compromised. What Ray was on about and what he was on about was making decisions for people about safety. This guy that came up and got under the blanket knew what he was doing. People aren't made of glass. Fifty year old people who are trapped in some childhood trauma--it's not that they're eight years old. . . .
>
> I see facilitators making those judgements for people and I just can't say how much I disagree with it. It's not the facilitator's role to make that judgement.

If the Joker/facilitator does his/her utmost to make the Forum event a welcoming, non-threatening place, he/she can still not control what people will bring to it from their own lives. What occurred at the Meares Forum was ugly, but necessary as part of a healing process in that community so that social change can begin. Diamond asserts, "The work is about being in the moment. . . . trusting the audience. . . . The director's job is to catch the things that happen; Forum is the single most challenging form of theatre there is." Diamond is not alone in insisting that the Joker must trust the audience and the actors.

SAFETY FOR THE JOKER

What of the issue of safety for the third player in the game of Forum, the Joker? After reading the "Canadian Roundtable" interview, and particularly in speaking with David Diamond, it is clear that the Jokers in the Roundtable discussion were speaking from their own sense of vulnerability. Diamond responded to the issue of safety for the Joker when I asked him how he negotiated a contract with the audience:

> We actually spend less time now clarifying. I think we got scared: and the more scared we got as Jokers, the more verbose our intro. got, trying to cover every eventuality. . . . I think that joking can become quite negative--sure there are parameters--but the audience will sometimes have new innovative ideas. You are, in fact, asking them to break the rules so why set up too many rules? Let them discover the Forum 'cause who knows what they're going to turn it into.
>
> I respond, I think, against the term 'contract' because in our culture . . . contracts are legal. . . looking for every eventuality, have very defined boundaries, and I think that's the antithesis of what needs to happen in a Forum.
>
> . . . Augusto has a phrase that I really like: he says, "Anything that is not expressly forbidden is allowed." There's a contract, okay, if you want to call that a contract.

Jokers could be scared of losing control, moving into unfamiliar territory, appearing vulnerable or foolish or incompetant, doing something that could result in the loss of professional credibility. If a Joker holds these fears, even unconsciously, while working with an audience they will be transmitted to both actors and audience and there will be undercurrents present while playing the game which will hamper the spontaneity of all participants.

Rose Adams comments on this question straightforwardly:

> I am much more explicit about contractual arrangements than many adult educators or Jokers. I do this for myself. If I am sure everyone is with me in the process I am facilitating, I feel more secure, and do a better job.

Adams acknowledges her own need to be secure in what she is doing, believing that will affect the whole dynamic positively. While Adams chooses to be explicit for her own sense of security, Mendel points out that often it is what is implicit, what is not said, that engenders understanding:

> You can only talk about the things that you could think about rationally, and express in a rational sort of way. There are areas where it's not really about that; it's about human interaction and our way of dealing with each other, and that is implicit. That is certainly also mirrored--*by yourself as Joker?*--and the actors, and my interaction with them--like the respect. I think, also, some of what you say in an explicit way--it doesn't--it's the implicit thing or the non-said part that actually makes a difference to people . . . . it's in the actual modes of behaviour that we see the difference.

Warren Linds agrees with this perspective:

> . . . after two or three interventions it's pretty clear. . . we don't have to state it very specifically any more. . . . It's so different for people that even if we state it explicitly it kind of goes over their heads--*so it's really the example that people see that informs them?*--yeah.

Adams' need to be explicit is tied to her own sense of security, not to the actors' needs or the needs of the audience. Mendel and Linds infer that what is made explicit probably has less impact on the audience than what they observe. If a Joker is "scared" this will be sensed by the participants.

The conclusion of this analysis of the issue of safety is that each Joker has a different safety threshold. If the Joker is confident in her/his role, this confidence will help to create an atmosphere which is secure. The choices the Joker makes in facilitating a workshop, directing the play, joking the Forum, will depend on her/his own personality and experience, and on the context of the situation in which the Forum occurs.

CHAPTER IV

THE NAMING OF FORUM THEATRE: THERAPY, THEATRE, EDUCATION, SOCIAL ACTION

There is a debate among Canadian Jokers as to what degree Forum Theatre should be considered a tool for therapy, education, or social action . Of the Jokers interviewed for this study, Spry, de Gueverra, and Nesser Ali are the strongest advocates for Forum as political action. Campbell, Diamond, Fraser, George, Adams, Mendel, describe work they have done which has had a therapeutic effect for participants. Foreman, Linds, McFarlane, and Campbell do work which is oriented towards education or outreach rather than political/social action. The Jokers who see themselves as professional theatre directors are the ones who have their own companies: Spry, Diamond, de Gueverra, Linds, McFarlane, Fraser. Foreman is a drama professor. There is no concensus about what Forum should aim to do, and those Jokers who are the strongest advocates for Forum as political action recognize its effectiveness in the other areas.

An excerpt from the Canadian Roundtable illustrates the confusion in naming Forum Theatre:

> Schutzman: It raises the question of our expectations and how we judge our own effectiveness. Which raises the issue of terminology. Do we see ourselves doing political action, or outreach, or therapy, for instance: These terms are debated in the States. . . . On what criteria do you decide?
>
> Cleverly: There's another level that we face here--Is it theatre (Playing Boal 212)?

These questions point to what underlies the controversy about Forum Theatre: theatre, therapy, education (outreach) or social/political action. The controversy is more than semantics. If an activity is defined as therapy, there is an onus on the therapist to provide for the emotional safety of the participants in that activity; if the activity is defined as social action, a person who doesn't like what is happening can rationally refuse to participate; if an activity is defined as educational, there is the expectation that the 'educator' has more knowledge than the 'learners' . These issues of responsibility, volition, trust, and knowledge are confused when the activity is defined as theatre. Theatre is popularly perceived as entertainment and, as such, is considered non-threatening. Theatre is also perceived as a place where emotions are evoked; an audience member is free to walk out if she/he is offended or emotionally upset. Social guidelines are compromised when the activity is Forum Theatre: the sense that theatre is being used to pursue therapy, education or social/political action confuses because theatre is generally considered passive entertainment, not an activity involving "self-activation" (Boal).[69]

The work of the Joker spreads into four different domains, those of social activist, educator, therapist, theatre director. These appellations have acknowledged criteria which may or may not be met by individual jokers. There are questions of credentials, criteria and terminology.

FORUM THEATRE AS THERAPY: COLLISIONS WITH THERAPEUTIC IDEOLOGIES

The original debate which errupted when Boal began his work in Europe in the late 1970's, was whether or not Forum Theatre was more a process for therapy than it was a process for social change. In an article by Gerardo Luzuriaga in 1977 Boal is quoted insisting that the goal of Forum is not individual therapy but to change society:

> Some of the Forum-Theater strategies suggest some kinship with

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[69] Boal is quoted using this term in the article by Gerardo Luzuriago. See footnote 71 below.

> psychodrama.[70] As someone pointed out to Boal in 1977 in France: "protagonists are invited to act out a traumatizing situation; then an analyst helps them find the place of the neurosis". But there is an important difference, replied Boal: *"Psychodrama aims at curing the patient, while Forum-Theater aims at changing society."* However valid that distinction may be, the Forum-Theater's potential for social change sounded overly optimistic, and Boal made this qualification later: that there is no magic of any kind in the Forum-Theater, that it is the "self-activity of spectators that self-activates them", that the Forum-Theater only gives them an opportunity to be active, and thus to contribute to changing society.[71]

Boal states the distinction he saw in 1977, but his qualification allows that self-activation on an individual level is the domain of Forum. In the same article (1990) Luzuriaga points out that Boal's distinction is less clear in the Forum Theatre he created in Europe:

> It is worth noting that in Boal's Latin American experiment of Forum-Theater, the themes analyzed were until recently for the most part political or socio-economic in nature. . . . But in Europe, in a quite a few instances, the Forum-Theater had to do with "personal" matters, like loneliness, homosexuality, etc., and rarely so in Latin America. . .
>
> The fact of the matter remains that when Forum-Theater revolves around "I"-type of problems, the affinity with psychodrama is striking. A good number of Boal's recent European experiences were designed to develop personal relationships, or to relieve frustrations and fears: the kind of problems psychoanalysts are concerned with. . . . And the psychoanalytic community has taken notice. Boal has been working with a group of psychoanalysts in Rio since 1988, and was the keynote speaker at the congress of Group Psychotherapy, in Amsterdam in August, 1989, the centennial of the birth of Jacob L. Moreno, the founder of psychodrama.[72]

There is an inference that Forum in the 'Third World' has a different focus from Forum in the 'First World'. In a 1980 interview Boal is ambivalent about making this distinction. He challenges this interpretation by insisting that TO, as a theatre process, supercedes therapeutic or political agendas:

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[70] The term 'psychodrama' is not defined here, and must be understood inclusively, not exclusively. It includes what was earlier defined by Moreno as sociodrama as well as what has come to be termed play therapy.

[71] Gerardo Luzuriaga, "Augusto Boal and His Poetics of the Oppressed", Discurso: Revista de Estudios Iberoamericanos, 8.1,1990, 61. (my emphasis)

[72] ibid., 61-62.

> [Q:] Could we conclude, then, that in Third World countries the "Theater of the Oppressed" tends to stress the social aspect of reality, while in the industrial countries it emphasises the psychological side?
> [A:] Maybe. But I wouldn't put it so bluntly, for I'm only half-way into that research. And it is important to notice that even in Europe, where we used to say that there is a strong psychological oppression, there are a lot of cops in the minds of the people, but there are also a lot of cops on the streets. There are many concrete problems, too: unemployment, lack of security for the workers, besides the anguish that comes from insecurity. Repression there is more sophisticated. The people are led to believe that they live in a democracy where one can do everything, though actually one can't. There is an established rite for everything, and if you don't avoid it, your family life gets as programmed as the industrial worker on an assembly line.
>
> When I go back to France I'll begin to work on something I've been planning for months, together with a psychiatrist: research on ways to delimit and make use of psychological and psychiatric techniques in the "forum theater". . . .
>
> But I believe that the "Theater of the Oppressed" is theater in the precise sense of the word. It is not the normal kind of theater in its final moment, stratified as a final product. It is *theatrical language*. It is as if we invited people to an exposition and when the public got there painters were working on their canvasses. And then one painter would ask the public: "What do you think, should I use this green or would I be better off using that blue?" Now I ask: Is that painting or is it not? Of course it is--with the sole difference that it's not a finished canvas, it's a process. It is aesthetic communication, not an aesthetic object yet. It is as if the magician does his trick and afterwards shows where the rabbit comes from, and how he does it, so that everybody can do it. Similarly, without giving up our individual crafts as playwrights, directors, or actors, for we want to remain artists--we try to show that everybody can play theater.[73]

Fraser offered comments about viewing Forum Theatre in the context of therapy and the terminology Jokers use as facilitators. She questions the ideology behind the terminology used in facilitated workshop processes:

> I've been thinking a lot about therapy and this work for the last couple of years and I've been trying to define it for myself and I've had a

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[73] Yan Michalski, "The "Active Spectator" Takes the Floor: An Interview with Augusto Boal", Theater 12:1, 1980, 16-18.

> number of interesting . . . collisions with . . . the current accepted therapeutic understandings--that there's a model out there that's getting taught and it's taught inside of facilitated work. I'm questioning the ideology behind it now and I think we're all assuming, we're all using: "Is it safe?"; we're using the words: "What are your boundaries?" We're assuming they have an absolute law and validity to them and I'm starting to really question that. . . .
>
> . . . the current sort of therapeutic ideology can help to some degree but it is robbing us of an external idea of what may be . . . the kind of forces that are operating very strongly in our culture, that are oppressing us. . . . I can see my work being challenged by these models: that you're not allowed to do this because to do this is unsafe. And I'm going, "Who is saying that and why?". . . I think we have to look at it and we have to be very careful. I'm not throwing out therapeutic practice . . . . I think it is a very critical time in terms of this work, and who's the practitioner of the work and how it's being practiced. We all have to ask the question when we do it: what are the laws at work that may be trying to stop us from doing it now? What assumptions are we making around the group being able to take care of themselves or not take care of themselves? Do we need to have counsellors and therapists there? Are they really taking care of them [the participants]? Those are the questions that I'm wondering about. . . . I am not a therapist.

Fraser cites two catch phrases she has heard in relation to facilitating workshops: "Is it safe?", and "What are your boundaries?" As she points out, these questions have an assumed value, but what do they mean--to the facilitator who asks them and to the participant who answers them? Do these questions have a place in a theatre workshop? What is the ideology which lies behind these questions? Are they questions about permission and if so, permission by and for whom? Fraser refers to forces which are trying to restrict the practice of Theatre of the Oppressed by applying an unquestioned ideology of therapy to the work of Jokers.

Campbell has comments and questions which relate to Fraser's:

> It used to just drive me crazy when people would say, "You can't do this work without a social worker or a counsellor there." Yes you can. You need to look at the people that say that and ask what their skills are in working with people and working with groups. . . . I think people become very uncomfortable or get really scared or get really angry. For me, the main thing is: when is it theatre? When are people bringing it on stage and when are people splitting off? . . . When is it real for them and when

> is it not theatre? . . . I don't have any clear lines where individual therapy and social change or social analysis starts and stops because they're so closely intertwined. I know the growth somebody can do just by participating in a Forum--in the process of creating it or participating in it. The growth that they can get in that can be just as good as they get in therapy, just as deep and just as meaningful.

Campbell has also had "collisions" (Fraser) with people and ideologies that attempt to curtail his work. Like Fraser, he is asking questions, but the framework he is using is: "When is it theatre? When are people bringing it on stage . . . . When is it real for them and when is it not theatre?" If people bring their real experience "on stage" they bring it into the 'aesthetic space' where the experience becomes fictionalized in relation to past reality and can therefore be changed and explored. It becomes valid in the 'aesthetic space' as both real and not-real. The participants choose to explore theatrically to make theatre, not therapy, though the process may be therapeutic. As Schutzman, Fraser and Campbell variously point out, the terminology and thus the criteria for judging what is therapy or social action is unclear. As Campbell says, there are not "clear lines" because everything is so "closely intertwined".

FORUM THEATRE AS EDUCATION OR SOCIAL ACTION: THE ISSUE OF PATERNALISM

Fraser and Campbell refer to collisions with therapeutic idealogies which are prevalent in the areas in which they work; there are also underlying conflicts in the areas of education and social/political action. Campbell referred to having difficulty using the word 'oppression' in promoting his work. Jokers at the "Canadian Roundtable" discussed the implications of this difficulty:

> Payne: Regarding terms, I do not use "Theatre of the Oppressed."
>
> Chandler/Malbogat: Nor do we.
>
> . . .
>
> Chandler: Or change.

> Payne: I don't even use change.
>
> Schutzman: Is it because the term "oppressed" implies too much of a political agenda?
>
> Payne: Yes.
>
> . . .
>
> Schutzman: Are we into some denial ourselves about how serious the matter is?
>
> Chandler: No.
>
> Cleverly: That depends on who you're communicating with.
>
> . . .
>
> Cleverly: (to Mady) I want to go back to something you asked earlier, if we are censoring ourselves (Playing Boal, 212)?

In choosing not to use the word 'oppression', the implication is that Jokers are censoring themselves in response to forces in Canadian society which would prevent them from working if they did claim a political agenda. This underlying conflict explains why Jokers in Canada often choose to describe their work as 'educational' rather than political. This choice bespeaks the assumption that education is apolitical, which would be questioned from a Freirean perspective.

Much of the employment Jokers have had has been for social agencies: government agencies, schools, social services programs, assault centres. Spry explains that, in her experience, the people who object most to TO are people who would describe themselves as caregivers:

My experience in general has been that the people who have that argument [Forum Theatre is oppressive] with me are not people who have had to deal with bad Forums. . . . They're almost always people that have had social work training. . . . and it's also that . . . a lot of people are doing social work nowadays because they don't want what happened to them to happen to other people . . . there still is that sort of feeling that, "Well, we have the answers."

Spry points to an attitude of those people with "social work training" which is paternalistic, of knowing more than the people they see themselves trying to help. This attitude is explained by Paolo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed:[1]

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. . . .
>
> . . . Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. . . . (39)

Freire speaks of two pedagogies: one which is dialogical and liberating and one which is "banking"[1] and oppressive. Education is not apolitical and in a critical paradigm would empower learners towards social and political action. If one accepts that theatre is educational in a liberating way (Courtenay, Chapter I), and that Forum Theatre in Canadian practice often has an educational focus, then Forum can be used as an educative tool for liberation. If Forum is used by an authoritarian institution for humanitarian purposes, by Freire's logic it can become an instrument of oppression. If the sponsor for a Forum event is an institutional authority, and the audience is under that authority's control, the dynamics of the event, while ostensibly 'humanitarian', can be, as Freire explains, repressive. The Joker may be acting both as an agent of authority and as a subversive. There is a dichotomy here and Jokers may reasonably be uncomfortable playing this dual role. With tension between the expectations of the sponsor and the desires of the Joker to dynamize the audience, the event can have questionable effect, either therapeutically or in terms of social or political action. Arlin McFarlane spoke about an experience her company had performing in a Jr. High Schoolwhere Forum was used as an educational tool:

> . . . it is a bit different [from a public Forum] when you're doing it in the schools.

> . . . Everybody has to go. . . and you have to have proper school decorum. There was absolute focus [from the students] because there was recognition that these scenes were very fundamental to their lives but it was very difficult to get people up to intervene. . . --especially if they're Jr. High--they're so commited to being uncommited, they would never dream of acting publicly in front of their peers. But they liked the scenes; they liked the interventions. I think it was a good starting point for further discussion and acknowledgement that they weren't as invisible as they thought they were. . . . *How about the school's expectations--not the students', but the administration's?* They expect positive approaches and not just a definition of the problem. We had to put a disclaimer on all the swearing we were doing as not condoning swearing and swearing was inappropriate in schools and that the school had given us permission to use swearing in this because we were portraying kids . . . . It was ridiculous how much disclaimer we had to put on the language in the plays and yet everybody knows that if you don't talk like that then you're not popular as a kid. I think a lot of schools live in a state of denial; the administration is in a state of denial about what's really going on in the student population. *Going into it did you realize there might be a potential conflict between what would actually come out of the Forum and what the administration wanted?* Yeah, and there were actually special counsellors that had been brought in because it was acknowledged that . . . people that needed to talk would need to talk outside the system.

There are apparent contradictions between the expectations of the school, of the theatre company and of the students in McFarlane's story. The goal of the company was to reach a common ground with the students and to break through their reticence to deal with their own issues. The administration wanted the work of the theatre company to have a normalizing effect. The students wanted to stay uninvolved in any activity where they could be observed acting individually. McFarlane speaks of the administration's denial of the reality of student life. When support was offered to the students after the Forum it was from outside the school system, where they could bring their concerns without fear of reprisal or censure. McFarlane demonstrates that she is caught between two desires: to reach students on the grounds of their reality and to not offend the school authorities. She was acting to protect on all fronts--the company, the students, and the administration, by taking the ultimate responsibility for resolving any conflicts between the students and the school to outside agencies. The process of dynamisation was aborted before any social challenge could be raised.

McFarlane is not the only Joker to face these dynamics in her work. Rick Campbell and Warren Linds also work within the school system and mention similar frustrations, particularly in implementing any kind of follow-up with students. Their experience is that too often their Forum work is a 'one shot deal' and nothing changes afterwards, either for the students or with the administration. Linds points out that when the Joker is seen as an agent of the school authority it is hard to gain the trust of the students; they may undermine the process by "opting out", while the school authority undermines the process by not allowing for any follow-up:

> I was co-joking with a teacher and of course the students all called him and I Mr. so-and-so; there were no first names--it's in the structure; it's in the school day. There's a kind of implicit agreement between the students and us that there's a structure to this process, and we've set the structure and they haven't. So they'll go along with it and they'll opt out in different ways: opt out by not saying anything; opt out by not contributing as much. By the fifth day you know who's opted in and who's opted out . . . it's a funny one: we're never sure if there's complete trust except when they play it back. When they do the play for teachers it's pretty clear they've gained a lot and have trusted us but the first couple of days it's touch and go . . . . We'd like these sorts of things to be more connected to some ongoing process in the school system, to peer counselling or . . . but it never really has clicked or come to that, to have some sort of ongoing agreement between the students and the structure in the system.

The dilemma which is pointed to by this discussion is that there is an inherent conflict between TO and the status quo. If Jokers are expected to work on behalf of controlling agencies to empower people, this is a suspect situation. The issue of safety for participants becomes symptomatic of the denial that there is anything systemic which needs to be addressed; it diffuses the focus of the work. The concern for safety is, as de Gueverra points out, "disrespectful" of personal autonomy. The focus goes to the perceived (by the authority) needs of the individual participants, diffusing the possibility for revolutionary action in either personal or social spheres. The participants become disenfranchised or unacknowledged, as happened to the high school students in the examples given by McFarlane and Linds. In Linds' case, the students who came to trust the Jokers were then betrayed because they could not take power to make changes. Lip service is paid to the problem which is thus trivialized. The catharsis which is generated will be a normalizing rather than a dynamizing force.[74] As Saiedeh Nesser Ali asserts:

> . . . issues are very controversial; it's politics. You can't think you will do political work and nothing will happen; that's bullshit. If it doesn't happen then there is something wrong with what you're doing; if there's no clash then nothing's happening. . . . you need to fight in a positive way to reach a deeper level.

Therapeutic effect is also nullifed because the possibility for change on a personal level is superficial.

THE EXCLUSIVITY OF PROFESSIONALISM VERSUS TRUST

If Jokers in Canada do not claim to be therapists or social activists, they cannot always take refuge, as does Boal, in claiming that they are professional theatre directors. In British Columbia, the Cultural Branch of the Provincial Government does not recognize Headlines Theatre as a professional company because they work with non-professional actors. They are thus disqualified from receiving Arts funding.[75] Diamond has said that he is tired of struggling with Arts Funding agencies to prove that his company is 'professional'. The domain which is open to Jokers is that of education, but work in this domain can, as Freire points out, be subject to corruption by paternalistic attitudes.

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[74] Boal recognizes a catharsis other than Aristotle's: "The goal of Theatre of the Oppressed is not then to create calm, equilibrium, but rather to create disequilibrium which prepares the way for action. Its goal is to *dynamise*. This dynamisation, with the action which results from it. . . destroys all the blocks which prohibited the realisation of actions such as this. That is, it purifies the spect-actors, it produces a catharsis" (Rainbow of Desire 72).

[75] This is information I received when I was inquiring about the possibility of finding funding to support Theatre on the Line, at UBC. I explained that the type of work we were doing was similar to Headlines Theatre, and that ended any hope of making a case for ourselves.

The issue rests on credibility and criteria. Each activity the Joker undertakes within the Forum (theatre, education, therapy or social/political action) is problematic, because each activity has generally accepted criteria which Forum supercedes as it occurs in the 'aesthetic space' and is "theatrical language" not theatrical product (Boal). The Joker inhabiting this in-between space supercedes defined roles. Each function the Joker assumes in her/his role as mediator--director, educator, therapist or activist--requires separate professional credentials. The anxiety Jokers have displayed in talking about their work comes, in part, from the fact that they are censoring themselves and that their work is often maligned by those who require credentials (Fraser and Campbell).

The perceived need to have professional status is symptomatic of the basic issue of trust. Salverson, in the "Canadian Roundtable" refers to the risk of becoming paternalistic, of assuming professional status as Jokers versus professional behavior: "where's the line between our need to be aware as professionals in terms of sensitivity and skill, and where are we becoming a new professional class in which we're the only ones who know? Can't we trust others to do it?" (Playing Boal, 204) Freire addresses the role of persons who choose to work alongside the 'oppressed' in their struggle for liberation:

> . . . these adherents to the people's cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as malific as that of the oppressors. . . . Our converts. . . truly desire to transform the unjust order, but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. They talk about the people, but *they do not trust them*, and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change.
>
> Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly (Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 46, my emphasis).

Whether the goal is therapy, theatre, education or social action, trusting the audience is an issue for some Jokers. These Jokers, who are particularly concerned about safety, demonstrate more need to control, to summarize, to guide the analysis in certain directions. De Gueverra speaks against this tendency to protect the audience when she talks about the changes she has made in her joking practice after recently watching Boal joke in Brazil:

> I learned from Boal: cut talking to the mimimum. . . . You don't always need to be pointing out to the audience. . . let the audience draw their own conclusions. . . . It's trusting the process and trusting your audience.

If Jokers are constrained by concerns for safety, this may be indicative of the constraints they feel from the 'therapeutic idealogies' mentioned by Fraser, which promote humanitarian, and therefore paternalistic (in Freire's view), patterns of interaction on those who are 'less fortunate'--the target participants of Forum theatre. These Jokers may take on the mantle of professionalism to achieve the credibility which will allow them to work; this professionalism, in turn, places them in a problematic position of authority.

The resistance to Forum Theatre being practised as 'therapy' comes (in Spry's opinion) from professionals with social work training. None of the Jokers in this study have denied the therapeutic value or effect of Forum Theatre. Part of the dilemma is the ideology that Fraser referred to: the ideology that is being taught reserves the right to practise therapy for those who have been sanctioned by that ideology (Campbell). Jokers have repeatedly stated they are not therapists but because the work of Forum is therapeutic their opportunities to work as Jokers have been curtailed or they choose to work with counsellors and social workers present.

Boal's latest reworking of his poetics in The Rainbow of Desire, attempts to do for therapy what Theater of the Oppressed did for theatre. De Gueverra explains:

> He is doing the same thing with that [The Rainbow of Desire and Cop in the Head exercises] that he is doing with Theatre Forum: it's a process of making things more democratic and taking the power away from the specialists, regaining the power of learning about your own emotions and

> your own stress. Why should you ask somebody else about it? I'm not talking about extreme cases. If you are mentally ill, maybe you need to go to a psychiatrist or professional, but if you are a person who just has come into some kind of complicated thing with yourself and you need to understand what makes you tickle, what makes you unhappy at certain times, why do you need always to have a psychiatrist tell you? Why can't you do that yourself--and with a group of friends even better--and by using that technique? And I think that is what has happened for people.

Theatre has always been therapeutic. Fraser argues:

> I was going to say, too, about joking, I think you are supposed to be an entertainer. I think that's part of the role. *If you want to keep it in the realm of theatre rather than group therapy?* I still think it's therapeutic; it's hugely therapeutic. I don't actually see the distinction between entertaining and therapeutic. I think that they're wedded, they're married.

Boal's view and practise is to recognize what has always been true and to apply it to a social and political agenda. While Boal has run great physical risks in practicing TO, Jokers in Canada have another risk, that of operating in a limited fashion, by being denied the right to claim either a political or therapeutic agenda, by doing 'outreach' which is ineffectual, by being relegated to the status of non-professional theatre directors. This risk is also a saving grace, for if Jokers become recognized as 'professionals', they can be suborned to work on behalf of those in authority whose interest is in perpetuating oppressive systems for the common good.

DISRUPTING THE STATUS-QUO FROM THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE

The role and the work of the Joker lies in the in-between space of theatrical language. As a theatre artist he/she empowers the spectactors and actors to take ownership of the process and create their own theatre: to play, to learn, to grow, to change. The key issue is that the Joker must trust the participants to make their own choices and be willing to abide by them. De Gueverra addresses the need for the Joker to serve the audience, not him/herself:

> I think the Joker really has to be a servant of the audience, and the need of the audience, to understand a certain issue. The Joker must never manipulate the audience. . . . The moment you manipulate your audience to give responses or to put out your own agenda you are disrespecting the audience and disempowering them and betraying them. I have seen that happen and I didn't like it--a Joker with his own agenda. . . . I don't think that as the Joker you can have your own agenda. . . you're not there to promote your own ideas, you're there to facilitate the discovery by everybody of different points of view.

If the Joker has her/his own agenda audience members are being deliberately manipulated or coerced. In Forum, the audience members must, if the Forum is to work, be willing to practice autonomy, to stand up and stop the action of the play and to intervene physically to change that action. This is a radical action: "In forum, roles are not fixed--not only character but the roles of "actor", "playwright", and "director". So forum is radical in relation to dramaturgy."[76] The role of the Joker is radical in that he or she does not direct the action of the intervenors, lead the audience as a therapist, teach, or incite the audience. The Joker mediates the event, making it possible for the audience to realize their objectives, whatever those may be in the moment of performance. As the Joker supercedes the roles of director, facilitator, educator, therapist, the spectactors supercede the role of passive audience members and become protagonists in their own cause. They upset the status quo.

Spry's response to the debate about theatre and social/political action returns to a basic premise of Theatre of the Oppressed:

> I think Forum is dangerous. If anyone has any doubts they definitely shouldn't be doing it. . . .
>
> What Forum is about is political action. . . . It can be empowering; it can be liberating; it should be thought-provoking. And if it's therapeutic, if it's empowering, if that happens to individuals that's wonderful, and that's part of the process. But it's there for political action: at the lowest point it's there to trigger off people's thinking and discussion; at its best point it's there to allow communities to actually find ways to resolve situations. . . . It's the naming of what is, what

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[76] Boal, in an interview with Michael Taussig and Richard Schechner, "Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal, The Drama Review 34, no. 3, Fall 1990, 58.

> usually does not get named. *The structure does not normally get named.* (my emphasis)

While Freire's and Boal's theory and practice in the 1970's was applied to a specific time and place in Latin America, to say that the positions of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' were much clearer and more applicable 'then and there' than they are 'here and now' is an exercise in selective hindsight. It is useful to recall what Boal said in the interview with Michalski in 1980: "Repression here [in Europe] is more sophisticated. The people are led to believe that they live in a democracy where one can do everything, though actually one can't." People can be both oppressor and oppressed by believing they are free when in fact they are not; they become self-oppressors with "cops in the head".

The challenge that Canadian Jokers are accepting is to name, or at least question, the structures which may be preventing them from working. In the Canadian context, where oppression is not an absolute duality of oppressor and oppressed, the question of safety is a screen which obscures the true shapes of oppressive social structures. By addressing this issue as a signal of the larger therapy/social action debate, Jokers will win through to a clearer understanding of how their compliance with the 'status quo' limits their practice.

CONCLUSION

FUTURE TRENDS FOR FORUM THEATRE IN CANADA

Question10 asked: *has your style/approach as Joker changed over your experience in doing Forum?* The unanimous response was "yes". Unconditionally, each Joker interviewed said that their approach was freer, more flexible, less controlling, that they were less serious in playing the role. Kathleen Foreman describes her understanding of the role of Joker over the journey she has made. She speaks for many of the other Jokers as well.

> I've had to learn that the Joker must be the Fool in order to set the stage. If the Joker's in the disguise of the expert, it's going to work against you. . . . I've come to understand it much more as a character. The demands of that role are very serious but the role itself cannot be too serious. . . . My style has drawn far less on my role as a facilitator and integrated much more of my skill as an improvisor and comedienne. . . .that's been my journey with it so far.

Jokers are mediators, not just in the Forum event, but in defining their roles as theatre directors, social activists, educators, therapists. The mediation is between the expectations of employers, participants, and themselves. As Diamond has said, you need to get your whole body dirty, not just your hands. This entails claiming the role of Joker and taking power from that role which in turn models taking power for the participants. Fraser speaks about being inspired as a Joker:

> *What is it that you recognize as inspiration?* Well, Augusto talked a little bit about the Joker when I was working with him in London and he said that the Joker is the character with the most charisma. . . . So I started trying to define what 'charisma' meant for me. I clearly feel when I joke that I have to go on stage right at the beginning of the performance; I clearly take the space; I clearly make myself present; I clearly stand in front of the audience and I clearly say: okay, this is it; it's happening now and I'm pulling it together. It's coming, in some sense, around me and through me. And I know that that's a really important thing to do in a

> performance, in a Forum.
>
> So I think that what he means by that, how I took that--what I just did--is that I'm over here; this is really what I'm doing. I'm not trying to hide it; I'm not going to pretend that I'm not here. I really, really am here. And my impulse is to make it as lively and as fun as possible. The Joker, to me, jokes.
>
> The last performance I did, I came in and did a cartwheel right at the beginning. I went, get rid of this sort of serious 'here we are'. They're going to see some serious scenes--so what? It's a play--that's the point. We're working on the reality of these images not the image of reality. We're working on 'this' so let's play. The Joker, to me, can energize and inspire movement and agitation and frustration, even. So that's what I thought 'charisma' meant to me. . . the one who understands the laws and the forces that run underneath it as well.
>
> . . . but I think the point is that we can't hide behind that this isn't what's going on. We obviously are there; we're obviously part of the show and it's being directed by us, the Joker. *So take it and use it.* Right. Take power from it. *And the other thing, too, is that even in doing that you're modelling taking power.* Yeah, yeah. . .

Fraser sees a need for the Joker to be charismatic, to be visible, to be vital, to draw the spectactors to the stage. As the Joker mediates between the audience and the actors, she/he is an animator, an entertainer, a catalyst to spur the audience to action, the bridge by and through whom the spectactors enter the playing space.

Each person interviewed has gone "through a whole long process of learning and exploring with people and testing it out and discovering where it goes"(Spry). I believe that their responses show a more mature understanding of their relationship to Theatre of the Oppressed than was evidenced in the "Canadian Roundtable". Five years have passed since that interview. Forum Theatre in Canada has moved on and will keep doing so.

What are Jokers' perceptions of their work now? They have accepted the controversies about safety and therapy and continued with their work in spite of them. Their impulse is to continue to explore different uses and adaptations of Forum Theatre, to stretch the form. Linds, Campbell, and Fraser would like to find ways to democratize the process further, to have workshop members do the joking in the Forum performance. Lina de Guevera is using Cop in the Head and Rainbow of Desire techniques in the rehearsal process for a production of Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba. She sees these techniques as a valuable method for character development in conventional theatre. Tessa Mendel would like to try non-realistic methods of doing Forum, to stretch the form so that more abstract problems and solutions can be explored, with less reliance on realistic dialogue. David Diamond has started on a new path towards what he is calling Theatre for Living:

> . . . the language is changing right now because we've [Headlines Theatre] gone to Theatre for Living. There are real differences, very real differences and they are very positive ones. The language is just developing and it's going to take a decade--it took Boal ten years--it's not like, snap, there's going to be Theatre for Living.
>
> . . . the Theatre of the Oppressed and the work that I've been doing and the work I see people do all over the world, is the invitation to come up onto the stage to get what you don't want: "I don't want to get beat up so I'm going to do this." There's a different question and that's, "what do you want?", and we move away from problem solving and into creating and there's a very different energy attached to that. . . . What I'm discovering is you can do Forum the way we've done Forum and then get to a point in that moment and go, "Okay, we've been doing this for a while now, but what do you think these characters want? What do they really want?". . . . So if we take the next step beyond 'what don't they want', we start understanding they are both oppressor and oppressed in that moment, that you can replace either one in that moment. There are some moments it is clear that there is an 'oppressor' and an 'oppressed', but I am, in fact, finding that the richer the work, the more real the work, the less cartoon the characters. . .
>
> So the language is changing: --and it's really in flux right now--instead of going, "We want you to replace a character you see as being oppressed", it's possible to say, "We want you to replace a character if you see that person struggling to get what they want and not being able to get what they want." Now then, you open up the possibility that you're actually doing Rainbow work in Forum and I think it's important to figure out--and the only way to figure it out is to do it.

Diamond's observation that characters can be both oppressor and oppressed in the same moment is one shared by other Jokers. His comment that Theatre for Living may actually be Rainbow of Desire work done in the context of the Forum event does not necessarily infer that Theatre for Living is more focussed towards individual therapy than social action. It is my belief that as long as the exploration is done publically as dramatic action, no matter the therapeutic significance to the individual spectactor intervening, the collective experience evokes Boal's 'sympathy' and the particular becomes communalized. Forum Theatre works as a "rehearsal for reality" for both the individual and the community. As this new work progresses it will affect the work of other Jokers. The next world TO conference in Toronto in 1997 will be an exciting showcase of innovations and applications of Theatre of the Oppressed.

While there are similarities in theory and process between Forum Theatre and Psychodrama, Boal has insisted that Forum Theatre is not intended for individual therapy but for social change. Both Forum Theatre and Psychodrama occur in what Boal terms "aesthetic space" where the drama is both real and not-real. It is this 'play' space that allows for learning to take place, for change to begin. While Boal has distinguished the intentions of Forum Theatre from Psychodrama, he has nevertheless acknowledged, with his new book The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy, that Cop in the Head and Rainbow of Desire exercises are useful as therapy whether or not in aid of developing Forum Theatre. He writes in the first chapter entitled, "Why This Book? My Three Theatrical Encounters":

> This Book also contains a theoretical section, in which I try to explain the reason for the extraordinary power, the intense and effective energy, of the theatric event in domains outside the theatre: the political, the social, the fields of education and psychotherapy (9).

This "theoretical section" addresses the 'theory' but does not necessarily sooth the disquiet some Canadian Jokers have felt about their practice. Rhonda Payne commented, in the "Canadian Roundtable":

> . . . What worries me about the Theatre of the Oppressed, and about various concepts of facilitators and jokers, is that we're starting to assume the role of fixers. And we're starting to move into the role of therapist, particularly with Cop-in-the-Head stuff (Playing Boal 217).

Payne's concern is about concepts and labels. In Canada, to be accepted as a therapist means one must meet certain critera, have certain credentials. Conversely, to be considered a theatre director, one must also have credentials. Jokers often fall in-between these two catagories.

Fraser, Campbell and Spry have spoken of limiting therapeutic idealogies and critics who attempt to curtail their work. Jokers have made concessions to these pressures by making sure there are properly credentialed counsellors present at workshops and performances. While they insist that they are not therapists, Jokers are still sensitive to the issues of emotional safety. Campbell expressed that there are no clear lines between therapy and social action:

> For me, the main thing is: when is it theatre? When are people bringing it on stage and when are people splitting off? . . . When is it real for them and when is it not theatre? . . . I don't have any clear lines where individual therapy and social change or social analysis starts and stops because they're so closely intertwined. I know the growth somebody can do just by participating in a Forum--in the process of creating it or participating in it. The growth that they can get in that can be just as good as they get in therapy, just as deep and just as meaningful.

Campbell's perspective suggests that he would agree with Boal that Forum operates beyond the boundaries of theatre, but that it is theatre and it is the effects that are intertwined.

My perspective is that despite the controversy about the effects of Forum Theatre and how these should be interpreted, Forum is profoundly powerful and can be used effectively in all domains. Boal has created the character of the Joker as a 'wild card', a destabilizer, first in the dramaturgical sense that the audience is empowered to act on the stage. The basic tenets of traditional western theatre are challenged, destabilized. Further, social and political structures, pedagogies, therapeutic ideologies and practices can and should be challenged. The status-quo can be destabilized to engenger critical analysis and change. Cleverly, Crowder and Chandler debate this issue in the "Canadian

Roundtable":

> Cleverly: . . . there's often a bit of a mess left afterwards because of all that has been stirred up. . . .
>
> Crowder: An argument can be made that destabilizing leads to change, leads to political action, leads to revolution.
>
> Chandler: That's also a therapeutic concept.

Jokers do not need to apologize for being destabilizers; that is their role. Fraser acknowledges this:

> The Joker, to me, can energize and inspire movement and agitation and frustration, even. . . .
> . . . but I think the point is that we can't hide behind that this isn't what's going on. We obviously are there; we're obviously part of the show and it's being directed by us, the Joker. *So take it and use it.* Right. Take power from it.

Theatre or therapy--the intention and the process of Forum is to 'stir things up'.

Jokers have found their opportunities limited if they claim to be social activists. Jokers participating in the "Canadian Roundtable" said they didn't use the word 'oppressed' or even 'change' in describing their work. The Canadian response to the negativity around political action has been to temper their work to make it seem more educative than radical. This has opened Canadian Jokers to the risk of becoming paternalistic. Jokers can be caught between wanting to empower people to change and being employed by social agencies which strive to help those who, in their view, need to be normalized. Paolo Freire describes this dilemma:

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. . . .
> . . . Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. . . . (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 39)

This dilemma is illustrated by the public school experiences of McFarlane and Linds where the schools wanted Forum to be a stabilizing force while its true mission is to destabilize.

The issue of professionalism extends into the domains of Jokers' work. Salverson, in the "Canadian Roundtable", questions whether the need to be considered 'professional' does not, in effect, disallow others to do the work of Theatre of the Oppressed. This issue is another manifestation of paternalistic oppression as Diamond pointed out in 1988:

> . . . We're not doing anything really new or innovative. Instead we're going back to something ancient: Theatre as a tool that community uses to investigate itself. To heal itself. And that can only happen if the people in the community do the work. We theatre workers can't do it for them, that's just another kind, liberal act of oppression. It is us holding onto our status as "experts" and "professionals". . . . It's us saying that the oppressed are incapable because they're too hurt, or not trained, or too stupid to do what we can do.[77]

The dilemma for Jokers is that they need professional status to work in Canada, but that professional status is only given by the status-quo which Theatre of the Oppressed is commited to destabilize. Freire points out that revolution cannot be realized without trusting the people:

> . . . They talk about the people, but *they do not trust them*, and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 46, my emphasis).

This thesis is a process of re-examination for me and I hope it will stimulate this process for other Jokers.

The issue of safety also needs re-examination. The greatest difficulty in addressing this divisive issue is that there is no clear definition of what safety or lack of safety means in a Forum workshop or performance. Some Jokers referred to physical safety while others referred to emotional vulnerability. The issue of safety is culturally interpreted. De Guevera spoke of the difference in attitude towards safety when she observed Boal joking in Brazil and concerns for safety in Canada:

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[77] David Diamond, in a letter to Lib Spry, printed in the Canadian Popular Theatre Association (CPTA) newsletter, Spring 1988.

> . . . nobody was concerned about this type of thing. This is an incredible luxury that we are talking about because people have to live in very, very harsh conditions, so nobody's going to think that going to a play is going to be damaging or you're going to be traumatized; you have enough trauma in daily life. . . .

For me, the fundamental answer to the questions of safety, risk, responsibility, is that the participants must choose the manner and degree of their own involvement. De Guevera separated support from choice:

> you have to give the people the support they need if the exercise, as a group, requires some kind of disclosure. What I always do is tell people that they don't have to share anything they don't want to share. . . and I respect peoples' choices. . . . But if somebody wants to do it. . . whatever choice they make is going to be respected.

Jokers will choose the extent to which they are explicit about the 'contract' with the audience because of their own level of comfort and the purpose of the Forum event. While important discussion should continue about potential for oppression in form of Forum, voyeurism and "authentic witnessing", the 'red flag' of safety should not cause Jokers to question the validity of their work, or inhibit their practice.

Jokers operate in an in-between space which, while limiting their work also allows for some freedom. Therapy, education and social action can all occur in a Forum event. The key for Jokers is to "trust the audience and trust the process" (de Guevera). This is a radical act, to give over control, to be a "servant" (de Guevera). The concerns for 'safety' are a smoke screen that is obscuring recognition of the structures which are limiting the work of Theatre of the Oppressed in this country. One strategy to combat the curtailment Jokers experience is to refuse to catagorize Forum Theatre, to hold fast to the in-between space.

As radicals, as 'wild cards', Jokers face personal dangers which are as real as the dangers faced by Boal in Brazil. Spry acknowledges these:

> . . . There is the danger that comes from doing this kind of work--that we may be ill-paid, burn out, have financing cut off, or have the authorities attempt to shut us up in one way or another. That is something that each one of us takes on when we choose to do this work, and I, and most of the people I work with, choose to do it because we believe that it is part of the struggle for liberation, our liberation. Obviously it is different for each one of us, depending on our own experience. It depends on class, on gender, on race, our politics, whether we live in isolation or are part of a community, what our family reality is. I can work the way I work because I am single, have no children and very few personal responsibilities, which gives me a great deal of physical and financial freedom.[78]

Spry's view of the marginalization of the Joker confirms what I have discovered in the process of writing this thesis. She offers little comfort beyond the certainty that the Joker's liberation is tied to the work of liberating others. There are risks involved in staying commited to the mandate of Theatre of the Oppressed.

Dialectical thinking is limiting: oppressor or oppressed, safe or not safe, theatre or therapy, education or social action, therapy or social action. The future exploration of Forum Theatre is the dialogical middle ground, the space between these extremes. The complexity of the social reality in Europe and North America fueled Boal's development of the Cop in the Head and Rainbow of Desire exercises to address the suppressed knowledge of oppression in the people who came to his Forum workshops. As both Fraser and Foreman have found, people need to work on a personal level before they can see beyond their own condition to the social structures that control their lives.

The effects of Forum Theatre are inextricably intertwined; dramatic action is the catalyst that allows self-activation to occur. There are no absolute goals, no absolute models to apply to Forum Theatre. Jokers in Canada are working beyond the dialectic of oppressor or oppressed. They are working to liberate themselves from the structures which try to contain them, against self-censorship, to explore new ways to continue the work of Theatre of the Oppressed.

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[78] Lib Spry, CPTA newsletter, Spring 1988.

> . . . issues are very controversial; it's politics. You can't think you will do political work and nothing will happen; that's bullshit. If it doesn't happen then there is something wrong with what you're doing; if there's no clash then nothing's happening. . . . you need to fight in a positive way to reach a deeper level (Saeideh Nesser Ali).

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APPENDIX I

PRECIS OF THE FORUM WORK OF JOKERS INTERVIEWED

Rose Adams is an artist living in Paradise, NS. She attended a Headlines Theatre training session in 1991. As part of the requirements for an M.Ed. in Continuing Education at Dalhousie University she conducted a Popular Theatre project for her Adult Education practicum. This project was titled: "Can I Connect the Strands Between Personal Growth and Social Change?" It consisted of a series of workshops with women who worked together using many of Boal's techniques to explore their personal, and by extension, social issues. She worked with Tessa Mendel to prepare to facilitate the workshops on her own. Adams' report on the project has many useful insights into the therapy/social action debate concerning Theatre of the Oppressed.

Saeideh Nessar Ali works with Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, BC. She is an immigrant from India and first became involved with Headlines as a workshop participant for the Forum project which produced " Sanctuary?" (1989) This project was sponsored by Amnesty International. She now co-facilitates Power Play workshops for Headlines, working as a facilitator, director and Joker.

Rick Campbell lives in Calgary, AB. He works as a Popular Theatre facilitator with special interest groups and schools. He directs many types of theatre and sometimes uses a Forum format for scenes. He works with non-actors in a workshop situation: they become the actors in a series of scenes that are improvised collectively. He has dealt with employment equity issues and racism in the schools.

David Diamond is the artistic director of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, BC. Headlines has been doing Forum Theatre for a decade. Diamond has developed the Power Play process where he and a co-facilitator will go into a community and conduct a five-day workshop to help the people of the community develop a Forum play. Some of the Forum plays that have been produced through the Power Play process have gone on to public performance in Vancouver as well as touring BC. Diamond has conducted two television Forums where people watching could phone in interventions which would be acted for them by volunteers. Headlines began as an agit-prop company and still produces agit-prop plays from time to time. Diamond has contributed his case study, "Out of the Silence: Headlines Theatre and Power Plays", to the collection in Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism.

Kathleen Foreman teaches at the University of Calgary, AB. She has worked with both Llb Spry and David Diamond. Her most recent work was a Forum project on gender and power relationships she taught as a course on Theatre of the Oppressed at the U of C. Her process was to work with students as actors-in-training to help them develop a Forum play collectively.

Patti Fraser is the co-director of Alchemy Theatre Lab in Vancouver, BC. Fraser began her Forum work with Headlines Theatre and has since begun her own company. She works to develop Forum Theatre through a workshop process similar to the Power Play process, but feels that the focus of her work as a Joker has shifted from that of Headlines.

Jacquie George works as a Joker with Headlines Theatre. She lives in Naniamo, BC. Her work has been co-facilitating Power Play workshops, particularly with native communities, and joking with the "Out of the Silence" tour around BC. The subjects of the Power Play workshops are often alcohol and drug abuse and family violence.

Lina de Guevara is the artistic director of Puente Theatre in Victoria, BC. She came to Canada from Chile where she worked as a theatre director. She works with immigrant groups doing Forum Projects. From her early work she has developed a company of actors who research and perform the plays she writes, as well as employing people from community groups as actors. The issues she has addressed with Forum Theatre include racism, women's rights, and generational tension in immigrant families.

Warren Linds is the director of Just Us Players in Regina, SK. His group is contracted by sponsors to research and develop collectively Forum plays which are performed for specific target groups, often around issues of employment equity. He has also facilitated Power Play type workshops in the schools about racism issues.

Arlin MacFarlane works as a Joker and director of Popular Theatre with the Yukon Educational Theatre company in Whitehorse, YT. She is also an educator and teaches theatre at Yukon College . Her company researches and writes Forum scenes for sponsor groups. They have dealt with women's issues and student's issues.

Tessa Mendel works out of Halifax, NS. with community groups to develop Forum Theatre using different approaches according to the purposes of the group. If the Forum is to be presented to a large, heterogeneous audience, she uses Boal's theatre techniques to quickly develop a play with the participants and to train them to present it as a Forum. These plays are generally educational in focus, giving the audience the opportunity to practice self-assertive skills in peer pressure situations. If she is working with a closed workshop group in an in-depth exploration of an issue, then Forum Theatre and exercises from Image Theatre are used as techniques for the group's own exploration. These explorations have dealt mainly with women's issues.

Lib Spry is the artistic director of Passionate Balance Theatre in Ottawa, ON. She has been working as a writer, director and Joker of Forum Theatre since the early 1980's after training with Boal in France. While her company of professional actors performs scripts she has written for specific Forum events for target audiences, she has also done Theatre of the Oppressed workshops with community groups. Passionate Balance has performed Forums about women's issues, sexual harassment, and employment equity. She contributed the essay "Structures of Power: towards a theatre of liberation", to the collection of works in Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism.

APPENDIX II

AN OVERVIEW OF COPS IN THE HEAD AND RAINBOW OF DESIRE THEATRE TECHNIQUES

Cops in the Head and Rainbow of Desire techniques are a natural outgrowth of Image Theatre techniques. In Image Theatre the participants may work individually or collectively to create images of oppression that are then animated in various ways. The social relationships and dynamics of oppression are seen more clearly when the discussion is physical rather than verbal. The focus is on the social/political pictures created. The Cops in the Head and Rainbow techniques are built on the physical vocabulary of Image Theatre but deal with the individual's difficulty in reading their own oppressive inner blocks which, in turn, hamper the group development of Image and Forum Theatre. These inner blocks may be very hazy and difficult to grasp. The purpose of the exercises is for the workshop group to assist each other in clarifying the internalized oppressors which, on an individual basis, keep them from achieving their desired goals. As individual oppressions become clearer, the group begins to see which oppressions are common among them and how these oppressions are conditioned by their society. To paraphrase Boal: the cops may be in our heads, but their headquarters are in society.

There are two exercises named specifically: "Cops in the Head" and "Rainbow of Desire". These two exercises are only two among many Image Theatre techniques. That they have come to signify what Boal and other practitioners regard as a new approach to theatre and therapy speaks to the presence of a different dynamic of exploration. The members of the group take on character roles which are aspects of the protagonist's personna. These roles are assigned by the protagonist who gets to observe how they act and react. The members of the group are also asked to give their observations--not interpretations. What is created for the protagonist is a gallery of multiple mirrors in which he/she can see him/herself reflected. Multiple choices are reflected in these mirrors and the protagonist will see other possibilities for action. The observers will also see other possibilities for action that may impinge on their own realities. I will give brief summaries of what these two exercises look like, but to fully understand how they work, the reader should refer to the text of The Rainbow of Desire.

COPS IN THE HEAD: A full description of this exercise and examples of its application are found on pages 136 - 150.

> This technique is most applicable to scenes in which the protagonist wants to do something, but, for reasons he may or may not understand, fails to do it. There are no concrete 'cops' present, stopping him doing it, but still he doesn't do it; so there may be 'cops in the head' instead. (A.J.) (The Rainbow of Desire, 136)

Step 1: The protagonist directs an improvised scene based on a real life experience of oppression using members of the workshop group as his/her actors.

Step 2: The Joker asks the protagonist to sculpt images (statues) of 'cops', or negative voices he remembers or imagined during the improv. The protagonist uses other group members to do this. These 'cops' must be actual people: family members, a boss, a priest, . . . not just symbols of society.

Step 3: The Joker asks the protagonist to arrange the images in a constellation of which he or she will be the centre. From this constellation it will be seen what the protagonist's relationship is to these 'cops in the head'.

Step 4: The protagonist approaches each statue he/she has made tells them something from their shared past. He/she begins with, "You remember when ____________?", and ends with, "That is why _____________." The statue receives this information as a statue but is now prepared to take up his/her character in the next step.

Step 5: The scene is reimprovised. While the scene is replaying on a realistic level, the 'cops' improvise the voices of their character and speak to the protagonist. They do not move, but the protagonist may move them physically. Once moved, however, their tendency is to move slowly back to their place in the constellation. The scene is happening on two levels: one, with the action of the scene occurring between the actors where the protagonist is striving to get what he/she wants, and two, with the action taking place inside the protagonist's mind, which is now made concrete for him/her, but not for the characters in the improvisation. "This tension is difficult to live with, it demands great emotional gymnasticism and requires a huge effort from the protagonist. It is incumbent on the director [Joker] to guard against this effort exceeding reasonable bounds and thus becoming ineffective (140)."

Step 6: The Joker holds a 'lightning Forum". All the participants are invited to take the protagonist's place and try out an action that they think might be effective against any of the 'ghosts' or 'cops in the head'.

Step 7: From this point, the scene operates only on the level of the 'cops in the head'. The protagonist approaches each 'cop' and, with a magnified or exagerated manner, tries to disarm him or her. When another participant thinks they understand how the protagonist is trying to defeat the 'cop', they come up and replace the protagonist, continuing the action as an 'antibody', and the protagonist moves on to the next 'cop'. Another participant replaces the protagonist with the new 'cop,' and so on. There are now several subscenes occurring between the 'cops' and 'antibodies' or proxy protagonists.

Step 8: The Joker organizes the subscenes into a kind of fair, encouraging the actors to increase the tension, to raise the stakes in the scenes. The protagonist now wanders through the fair, stopping at each scene according to his/her interest. The actual movements of the protagonist will be observed and 'read' back to him/her in the last step.

Step 9: "The director [Joker] and the whole group exchange ideas, but without attempting to arrive at consensus. . . . It is important that the participants *admire* (wonder at) the protagonist's actions and reactions, and that they reveal their*surprise*; it is equally important for the protagonist to *admire himself in the midst of these admirations*. . . .

. . . To surprise oneself means to learn something new, something strange, something unusual about oneself: something possible! (141)"

RAINBOW OF DESIRE: A full description of this exercise and examples of its application are found on pages 150--167.

> No sensation, emotion or desire exists in a pure state in the human being. . . .
>
> This technique helps to clarify these desires, these wills, emotions, sensations. It allows the protagonist to see herself not as a univocal being, like her physical image reflected in a physical mirror, but as a multiple being, her image reflected by the prism which is the other participants (150).

Step 1: The protagonist scripts, directs and acts in an improvisation of a scene of oppression from her/his life, employing actors from the other participants in the group.

Step 2: The Joker asks the protagonist to create images of her/his desires, emotional states, which she/he feels are at work in the scene. She/he first sculpts these images with her/his own body and when another participant feels she or he identifies with that image they come up and reproduce that image for the protagonist who will fine tune the image.

Step 3: The Joker has the images of desires stand in a line to the side of the playing space. The protagonist speaks to each image about her relationship to that image, in terms of what she/he wishes or thinks about her/himself: "I am like that because ________.", or, "That's not the way I would like to be, but ________." These statements are said in front of all the participants who are witnesses.

Step 4: The antagonist from the improvised scene returns to the playing space and the protagonist sends each image, one at a time, into the space to contest with him/her, as in the original scene. The antagonist deals with each image as if they were individual characters; each image is a color of the rainbow.

Step 5: The protagonist sends the images back into the space one by one, but they remain in the space. She/he arranges the images in a constellation around the antagonist, creating a ‘rainbow of desires’. The antagonist confronts all the images collectively as if they were a single person, the protagonist.

Step 6: The protagonist then initiates a one-to-one dialogue with each image, trying to impose her/his will on that desire. The images will respond either to assist in changing or may defend themselves. The dialogue should begin with a phrase like: “I would like to be more like that because ________.”, or, “I would rather be less like that because ________.” During this process the colors become more defined. The manner of the how the protagonist conducts the dialogues will be observed by the participants.

Step 7: The protagonist now stands behind or beside the antagonist in the centre of the constellation to see her/his ‘rainbow of desire’ from this perspective. The antagonist leaves and the protagonist takes his/her place in acting out the scene.

Step 8: The protagonist leaves the playing space and the 'agora of desires' begins. The images now become aware of each other and debate with each other, in changing pairs, how to deal with the antagonist. The protagonist wanders through the 'agora' to listen to what the images have to offer. Her/his progression is observed by the participants.

Step 9: The images of desire leave the playing space and the protagonist reimprovises the original scene trying to make her/his will prevail over the antagonist. The outcome of the scene may or may not change.

Step 10: "All the actors must tell of what they felt or noticed from within the scene, while the other participants express what they felt or noticed observing the scene.

The director [Joker] must coordinate the discussion, without ever trying to 'interpret' or 'discover the truth'. He must only signal the originalities, the curiosities, all the aesthetic aspects of each intervention--the signifiers, rather than the signifieds (156)."

The difference in premise between the two exercises is that 'cops in the head' are the desires of others; the 'colors of the rainbow' are the desires of the protagonist. The Rainbow of Desire is an exercise that probes deeply into a person's understanding of her/himself. I would distinguish its effects from therapy by stressing that the Joker's role is to coordinate not interpret. The interpretation belongs solely to the person who is the subject of the exercise and it is entirely her/his choice how to act on what she/he as learned. As Boal has pointed out, Theatre of the Oppressed is certainly therapeutic, but. . . ?

> . . . I reiterate that whatever therapeutic effect the Theatre of the Oppressed may have, this effect is obtained through aesthetic means alone, via the senses, because art is the medium we are dealing with (96).